Jesus Christ

An Artifice for Aggression



A 6th century mosaic of Jesus at Church San Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, Italy

Sita Ram Goel

Jesus Christ

An Artifice for Aggression

Sita Ram Goel

VOICE OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

ISBN 81-85990-16-6

First Published: 1994
First Reprint: 2001

Published by Voice of India, 2/18, Ansari Road, New Delhi - 110 002
and printed at Rajkamal Electric Press, New Delhi -110 033

Preface

The first glimpse of the Jesus of the gospels came to me in 1956. My Jesuist friend who had tried to convert me, had failed in the attempt. When we were back at the mission headquarters in Patna, the following dialogue took place between us.

"You believe that Jesus was an avatar," he asked.

"Yes, I do," I replied.

"Can an avatar tell a lie?"

"He is not supposed to."

"What if Jesus says he is the only God?"

"He can't say that."

My friend picked up a copy of the New Testament and read out several passages from the gospels. Jesus *did* say in so many words not only that he was the only God but also that those who did not accept his claim would burn for ever in the infernal pit. I realized with painful surprise that Jesus was not all Sermon on the Mount as I had been led to believe by his Hindu votaries.

Years passed, and I had no time to spare for Jesus. I turned to him again in the eighties when Ram Swarup made me wise about the character of monotheistic creeds. It was then that I turned to the gospels. I was horrified. Now I could see why the history of Christianity had been what it had been. The source of the poison was in the Jesus of the gospels. The rest of my studies followed.

A few years ago I was discussing the menace of Christian missions with a Gandhian friend. He agreed with me that there was something sinister about them. I told him that we shall have to tell our people the truth about Jesus if we wanted to tackle the missions. He was visibly shaken, and said to me in a voice choked with emotion, *"Sitabhai. Jesus ko kucch mat kahiye* (Brother Sita, do not touch Jesus)!"

"Have you read the gospels," I asked him.

He was annoyed, and shot back, "That is a personal question."

I had to drop the subject. Every time I have asked opinionated people about the source of their opinion on a particular

question, I have been accused of being personal. I am thinking of writing an essay — Advantages of Being An Ass.

And now I have defied the ban. I do not know how my Gandhian friend will take it.

I have wondered over the years why we Hindus have remained preoccupied with the behaviour patterns of Muslims and Christians and not with the belief systems which create those behaviour patterns. We object to Christian missions, but refuse to discuss Christianity and its God, Jesus. We object to Islamic terrorism, but refuse to have a look at Islam and its prophet, Muhammad. I see no sense or logic in this Hindu habit.

In fact, we go a step further. We appeal to the Christian missionaries in the name of Jesus, and ask them not to do what they have been doing. We appeal to the Muslims in the name of Muhammad, and ask them to stop doing what they have been doing. In the process, we have invented a "real" Jesus and a "true" Christianity. We have also invented a "real" Muhammad and a "true" Islam. The missionary and the mullah smiles at our inventions but goes ahead and makes good use of our soft-headedness. That is why we have failed to solve the "communal problem" all these years. We have never tried to find out why our own people, which both Christians and Muslims are, should become alienated from us when they pass under the spell of Christianity and Islam.

Flattering the bully may become necessary when the bully is powerful and there remains no other way of softening him except by extolling his heroes or his cult. Hindus have experienced such emergencies *vis-a-vis* both Islam and Christianity. But there is no reason for their continuing with the same psychology. Hindus should not convert an *apaddharma* into *Sanatana Dharma.*

New Delhi
15 April 1994

SITA RAM GOEL

Contents

Chapter 1
Jesus of History

Christian missionary propaganda in general and the theologies of Fulfillment, Indigenisation (or Acculturation), and Liberation in particular leave the impression as if Jesus Christ was a mighty figure who took the world by storm as soon as he appeared on the scene. Evidential Theology which tells us of miracles which are supposed to have accompanied his birth and death as well as of those reported to have been performed by him in the course of his ministry, has been one of the main weapons in the armoury of Christian missions. I remember very vividly the words of my friend, the Jesuit missionary, who tried to convert me in 1956. “Let me tell you at the very outset,” he had said, “that Jesus is no mythological mumbo-jumbo like your Rama and Krishna, and even Buddha. On the contrary, he is a solid historical figure whose miracles were witnessed and vouchsafed by many contemporary people.”

The historicity of Jesus Christ as described in the gospels has been for a long time one of the principal dogmas of all Christian denominations. In India where the history of the search for the Jesus of history remains unknown even to the so-called educated elite, the missionaries continue to hawk this dogma without fear of contradiction. The scene in the modern West, however, has undergone a great change. What we witness over there is that this “solid historical figure” has evaporated into thin air as a result of painstaking Biblical and Christological research undertaken over the last more than two hundred years, mostly by theologians belonging to the Protestant churches.

We need not bother about the miracles which are supposed to have accompanied the birth and death of Jesus or to have been performed by him. The subject was dealt with very aptly by Edward Gibbon who wrote towards the end of the eighteenth century. “But how shall we excuse,” he had asked, “the supine inattention of the Pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence not to their reason but to their senses? During the age of Christ, of his

apostles, and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by many prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, demons were expelled, and the laws of Nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and, pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alteration in the moral or physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth, or at least one celebrated province of the Roman Empire, was involved in a preternatural darkness for three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history. It happened during the lifetime of Seneca, and the elder Pliny who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence, of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of Nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. Both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe. A distinct chapter of Pliny is designed for eclipses of an extraordinary nature and unusual duration; but he contents himself with describing the singular defect of light which followed the murder of Caesar, when during the greatest part of a year the orb of the sun appeared pale and without splendour. This season of obscurity, which cannot surely be compared with the preternatural darkness of the passion, had been already celebrated by most of the poets and historians of that memorable age."[1] What concerns us here is the question whether a man named Jesus in the gospels ever lived on this earth and, if so, what was he like.

Quest of the Jesus of History

The quest of the Jesus of history commenced when Hermann

[1] Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* Modern Library Edition, n.d., pp. 443-44.

Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768), Professor of Oriental Languages at the University of Hamburg in Germany, subjected the Bible to higher criticism and wrote in secret some 4,000 pages. His work was published in seven fragments by his friend Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, several years after his death. The last fragment, *The Aims of Jesus and His Disciples,* published in 1778, presented Jesus as a failed Jewish revolutionary whose dead body was stolen from his tomb by his disciples in order to spread the story of his resurrection. A storm of agonised protest blew over the Christian world. But that did not stop the theologians from pressing forward on the path blazed by Reimarus. Today the shelves in libraries all over the Western world are laden with Lives of Jesus. There is hardly a year when some scholar or the other does not come up with a new Life of Jesus. In fact, by now the Jesus of history has become a veritable industry. All available evidence, Christian and non-Christian, has been and is being examined and presented from all sorts of angles.

The Jewish Evidence

Christian tradition tells us that Jesus was a Jew who lived in Palestine during the first 30 or 33 years of the era which is supposed to have commenced from the date of his birth. It is, however, strange that Jewish historians who lived and wrote during the same period or a little later, fail to notice him as well as the religion supposed to have been founded by him. Philo (20 BC-54 AD), who wrote a history of the Jews, knows no Jesus Christ and no Christians. So also another historian of the same period, Justus of Tiberius.

The most remarkable case is that of Flavius Josephus who lived from AD 36 or 37 to 99 or 100. He completed two monumental works — *The Jewish War* in 77 AD and the *Antiquities of the Jews* fifteen years later. The histories mention no Jesus Christ. His first work relates to AD 66-74 when the Romans put down a widespread Jewish rebellion in Palestine, and by which time the Christian church at Jerusalem is supposed to have functioned for 35 years. The work has not a word about Jesus or his followers. Christian apologists point to two passages, one long

and the other very short, which mention Jesus as a wise man and also as Christ. But scholars have proved quite convincingly that both of them are either clumsy Christian interpolations or have been tempered with by Christian scribes.[2] It has to be remembered that none of the manuscripts of Josephus' *Antiquities* is older than the eleventh century, so that Christian scribes have had ample opportunities for tempering with the text.

The vast rabbinical literature of the Jews, composed during the first two and a quarter centuries of the Christian era, contains only five authentic references to Jesus. But they "do not conclusively establish his historicity, as none of them is sufficiently early". Moreover, "they are so vague in their chronology that they differ by as much as 200 years in the dates they assign to him". None of the five Jesuses fits the Christian scheme of Jesus Christ's birth or life or death. The Talmud betrays no knowledge of Jesus independent of the Christian tradition, and it is conceded by most Christian scholars that it "is useless as a source of information about Jesus".[3]

The Pagan Evidence

The Greeks and Romans have left to posterity a vast historical and philosophical literature written in or referring to the time-bracket when Jesus is supposed to have lived. But it is unaware of him. Seneca (2 BC-66 AD), Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD), Martial (40-102 AD), Plutarch (45-125 AD), Juvenal (55-140 AD), Apuleius (d. 170 AD), Pausanius (d. 185 AD), and Dio Casius (155-240 AD) do not mention any Jesus or Christ. Epictetus (50-100 AD) refers to Galileans starting with Judas the Galilean who led the Jewish revolt against Rome in the first decade of the first century, but not to Jesus of Nazareth who is supposed to have come from Galilee shortly afterwards.

[2] William Benjamin Smith, *Ecce Deus: Studies of Primitive Christianity,* London, 1912, pp. 230-37; Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization,* Part III, *Caesar And Christ,* Fourth Printing, New York, 1944, p. 552; Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity,* Penguin Books, London, 1978, p. 21; Ian Wilson, *Jesus: The Evidence,* Pan Books, 1985, pp. 51-54; Michael Arnheim, *Is Christianity True?,* London, 1984, p. 4; G.A. Wells, *Did Jesus Exist?,* London, 1986, pp. 10-11. Many more critical studies on the subject can be cited.

[3] G.A. Wells, op. cit, p. 12 with reference to J. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth,* London, 1925, and M. Goldstein, *Jesus in the Jewish Tradition,* New York, 1950.

Much has been made by Christian apologists of a few words or stray passages referring to "Chrestus" or his worshippers in Pliny the Younger (60-114 AD), Tacitus (55-120 AD), Suetonius (70-120 AD) and Sulpicius Severus (d. 400 AD). But critical scrutiny has shown that all these references either do not relate to Jesus of Nazareth, or are influenced by Christian tradition, or are clever Christian fabrications. Ian Wilson concludes that "in all this there is scarcely a crumb of information to compel a belief in Jesus' existence".[4] Paul Johnson comments that fabrications "occur throughout the history of Christianity up to Renaissance and even beyond".[5]

The word "Chrestus" which occurs in some of these Pagan sources and which has provided grist to the mill of Christian apologetics, did not mean in the ancient world the same as the word "Christus" or "Christos". This appellation simply meant "good" or "agreeable" and was claimed by characters belonging to several sects which practised initiation by anointment. That alone can explain the attempt by a Christian scribe to scratch the "e" in Chrestus and replace it by an "i" in a manuscript of Tacitus.[6] What clinches the argument is that the word "Christian" does not appear in the Christian literature itself before 140 AD. On the other hand, anti-Christian polemics which appears for the first time around 160 AD, starts by questioning the existence of a character called Jesus Christ.

The Roman philosopher Celsus is quoted by Origen (185-254 AD), the great Christian theologian from Alexandria, as saying in 178 AD that "you [Christians] relate fables and do not even give them verisimilitude". Typho, another Roman polemist, wrote to Justin Martyr, the Church Father from Palestine (100-160 AD), that "you follow a vain rumour and are yourselves the makers of your Christ", and that "even were he born and lived somewhere none would know of him". As late as the last quarter of the fourth century, St. Jerome (340-420 AD) was complaining

[4] Ian Wilson, op. cit, p. 51.
[5] Paul Johnson, op. cit., pp 26-27.
[6] Georges Ory, *An Analysis of Christian Origins*, London, 1961, p. 33 and fn. 38.

that the Gentiles doubted the very existence of Jesus, and that "in the time of the apostles even, when the blood of Jesus Christ in Judea was not yet dry, it was pretended that the body of the Lord was merely a phantom".[7]

Gibbon confirms that Christians were little known in the first two centuries of the Christian era, or, if known to some notables in the Roman Empire, were despised as dismal fanatics. "The name of Seneca," he writes, "of the elder and the younger Pliny, of Tacitus, of Plutarch, of Galen, of the slave Epictetus, and the emperor Marcus Antonius, adorn the age in which they flourished, and exalt the dignity of human nature. They filled with glory their respective stations, either in active or contemplative life; their excellent understandings were improved by study; philosophy had purified their minds from the prejudices of the popular superstition, and their days were spent in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue. Yet all these sages (it is no less an object of surprise than of concern) overlooked or rejected the perfection of the Christian system... Those among them who condescend to mention the Christians consider them only as obstinate and perverse enthusiasts who exacted an implicit submission to their mysterious doctrines without being able to produce a single argument that could engage the attention of men of sense and learning."[8]

Evidence of the Gospels

All languages which have been influenced by Christianity contain the expression, "gospel truth". But truth is exactly what we find completely missing from the gospels when it comes to the life and teaching of their hero — Jesus of Nazareth. In fact, the gospels violate one of the Ten Commandments — thou shalt not bear false witness — and can be easily caught in the act.

1. *Year of Birth:* "Both Matthew and Luke assign Jesus' birth to 'the days when Herod was the king of Judea' — consequently before 3 B.C. Luke, however, describes Jesus as 'about thirty years old' when John baptised him 'in the fifteenth year of

[7] Ibid., pp. 35-36.

[8] Edward Gibbon, op. cit., p. 442.

Tiberius' i.e., A.D. 29; this would place Christ's birth in the year 2 B.C. Luke adds that 'in those days there went out a decree of Caesar Augustus that all world should be taxed... when Quirinius was the governor of Syria.' Quirinius is known to have been legate in Syria between A.D. 6 and 12; Josephus notes a census by him in Judea but ascribes it to A.D. 6-7. We have no further mention of this census. Tertullian records a census of Judea by Saturninus, Governor of Syria, in 8-7 B.C.; if this is the census Luke had in mind, the birth of Christ would have to be placed before 6 B.C."[9]

John's gospel states that Jesus was not fifty years old when he died, so that Jesus must have been born around 22-15 BC. Eusebius places his death in 22 AD, which takes his birth to 9 BC if he was 30 when he died, to 12 BC if he was 33, and to 28 BC if he was nearing 50. The year 1 AD as the year of his birth was assumed by the sixth century Roman monk, Dionysius Exiguus, when he worked out the chronology which has prevailed since then.[10] It is significant that neither the gospel of Mark nor that of John bothers to mention his birth. They start with his baptism by John the Baptist. Modern scholars think that the nativity stories in the gospel of Matthew and Luke have been added later. The interpolators were either unaware of one another's doing, or did not care to cross-check. They contradict one another at several important points.

2. *Date of Birth*: "We have no knowledge of the specific day of his birth. Clement of Alexandria *(ca.* 200) reports diverse opinions on the subject in his day, some chronologists dating the birth April 19, some May 10; he himself assigns it to November 17, 3 BC. As far back as the second century the Eastern Christians celebrated the Nativity on January 6. In 354 some Western churches, including those of Rome, commemorated the birth of Christ on December 25; it was already the central festival of Mithraism, the *natalis invicti solis*, or birthday of the unconquered sun."[11]

[9] Will Durant, op. cit., pp 557-58.
[10] Michael Arnheim, op. cit., p.7.
[11] Will Durant, op. cit., p. 558.

Other sources give other dates. "As for the *date* of Christmas, the chances are no better than 1 in 365 that Jesus' birthday fell on 25 December. A number of different dates have contended for the title — including 20 May, 19 April, 17 November, 28 March, 25 March and 6 January — and it took nearly five hundred years before 25 December came to be generally accepted. The reason for the choice of this date owes nothing to historical evidence but a great deal to the influence of other religions. It was no accident that 25 December happened to be the birthday of the 'Unconquered Sun' *(Sol Invictus)*, the chief festival of the Mithraic cult, a popular mystery religion of the late Roman Empire which shared quite a number of elements with Christianity, notably its emphasis on rebirth and salvation."[12] Ian "Wilson concludes, "Not only the date but also the year of his birth are unknown, and on present evidence unknowable..."[11]

3. *Place of Birth:* "Jesus was born at Bethlehem. Or was he? It is one of the best known 'facts' of Christianity, on the strength of which the town of Bethlehem has developed a thriving tourist trade. But is it true? Was Jesus *really* born in Bethlehem? Unfortunately, even the Christian scriptures disagree among themselves. Matthew and Luke both say yes, while John (7: 41-2) and Mark (1:9 ; 6:1) give the impression of never even having heard of Jesus' supposed birth at Bethlehem but assume that his birthplace was Nazareth, a small town in the northern region of Galilee, at the opposite end of the country from Bethlehem."[14]

When we come to details, however, even Matthew and Luke part company. For Matthew, Jesus is conceived and born in Bethlehem straight away. Luke finds his parents in Nazareth at the time of his conception, and drags them to Bethlehem so that they may he counted in a census. Even if we forget the fact that there was no census when Jesus is supposed to have been born, the story does not make sense. Firstly, neither Nazareth nor Bethlehem was under Roman jurisdiction in 1 AD. Secondly,

[12] Michael Arnheim, op. cit., p. 6.
[13] Ian Wilson, op. cit., p. 47.
[14] Michael Arnheim, op. cit, p. 9.

unlike Joseph, Mary did not belong to Bethlehem and there was no reason for her to travel to that town all the way from Nazareth, particularly in a state of advanced pregnancy. The only reason for Bethlehem being presented as Jesus' place of birth is the prophecy in the Old Testament (Micah 5:2) that the Messiah will be born in that place.

Joan Taylor, a historian from New Zealand, has shown *{Christians and the Holy Places,* OUP, 1993) that the Nativity Church at Bethlehem was built after demolishing the Pagan temple of an ancient God, Tammuz-Adonis. As Arnheim has shown, the Christians claim to Bethlehem was a fraud from the very beginning.

Nazareth fares no better as the place of Jesus' birth. There is no positive proof that this place existed at the time when he is supposed to have been born. It does not occur in any Roman maps, records or documents relating to that time. It is not mentioned in the Talmud. It is not associated with Jesus in any of the writings of Paul. Josephus who commanded troops in Galilee does not mention it. It appears for the first time in Jewish records of the seventh century. Scholars of the subject think that Nazareth was brought into existence and became hallowed simply because of a mistake in translating the term "Nazarene" found in the Greek versions of the two gospels as well as in the Jewish literature of that time. The word denoted a Jewish sect to which Jesus is supposed to have belonged. The Quran and early Islamic literature know the Christians as the Nasara, but are not aware that Isa Masih came from the town of Nazareth. But in Latin and other translations "Jesus the Nazarene" became "Jesus of Nazareth". New translations of the gospels have corrected the mistake but retained the story unchanged.

4. *Genealogy and Parentage:* Of the four gospels, Matthew and Luke alone provide Jesus' family tree in an effort to trace him back to King David and even to Abraham and Adam. But there are huge and irreconcilable differences in the two genealogies, not only in the names of Jesus' ancestors but also in the number of generations. There are only three names that are common in the two family trees. Even the name of Joseph's father

and Jesus' grandfather is not the same. Matthew accommodates 28 and Luke 41 generations of Jesus' ancestors in the same span of time. It seems that the writers of the two gospels share nothing in common except their zeal to prove that Jesus was descended from King David.

The biggest puzzle, however, takes shape when both of them announce in the next breath that Jesus was the Only-begotten Son of God born of a virgin! In fact, Matthew (1.23) quotes Isaiah (7.14) from the Old Testament in order to fortify this announcement — "Behold! A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel."

Will Durant comments, "The virgin birth is not mentioned by Paul or John, and Matthew and Luke trace Jesus back to David through Joseph by conflicting genealogies; apparently the belief in the virgin birth rose later than in the Davidic descent."[15]

5. *The Virgin Birth*: It is the conflicting versions of virgin birth we find in Matthew and Luke, which give away the game.

Matthew says that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was betrothed to Joseph but they had not lived together when Joseph discovered that she was pregnant. He was a kind man, and did not want to expose Mary to death by stoning, the standard punishment for adultery under the Jewish law at that time. He, however, made her leave his home. It was then that an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and informed him that Mary had been impregnated by the Holy Spirit. The angel added that Mary's son would save his people from their sins, and was to be named Jesus. It is at this point that Matthew quotes the prophecy from Isaiah in order to confirm the angel's announcement. Joseph awoke, took back Mary into his house, and she gave birth to Jesus. It is only then that Joseph had conjugal relations with her, that is, Mary did not remain a virgin after the birth of Jesus. All this happened in Bethlehem.

Luke, on the other hand, informs us that the angel visited Mary in a waking state, and announced the birth by her of a son whom God would give the throne of David. Mary wondered how that could happen because she was still a virgin. The angel as-

[15] Will Durant, op. cit., p 559.

sured her that she would be visited by the Holy Spirit, and that her son would be the Son of God. Luke does not invoke any Old Testament prophecy in support of this assurance by the angel. And he makes all this happen in Nazareth, months before Mary travelled to Bethlehem with Joseph in an advanced state of pregnancy. Nor does he confirm that Mary and Joseph had conjugal relations after Jesus was born at Bethlehem. They were only betrothed when they travelled to that city. "In other words, so far as Luke is concerned, Mary appears to be an 'unmarried mother'."[16]

Matthew's citation from Isaiah can be dismissed straight away as a clumsy attempt at cover up. As a Jew conversant with the Hebrew Bible, he must have known that the word *"almah"* used by Isaiah did not mean "virgin" but "young woman", and that the correct Hebrew word for "virgin" was *"betulah"* which Isaiah had used five times but not in this context. He chose to cite from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Bible, because there the word *"almah"* had been wrongly translated as *"parthenos"*, the Greek word for "virgin".

New translations of the Bible have corrected the mistake. It is only the Catholic Church which continues to stick not only to the dogma of the virgin birth of Jesus but also to the myth of Mary's permanent virginity, and refuses to face the fact that Matthew, who floated the myth, himself mentions Mary as having conjugal relations with Joseph only a few lines later. Elsewhere in the gospels we find Mary being mentioned as the mother of several children besides Jesus. The Catholic Church, however, has extended the dogma of Mary's virginity to her and her female ancestors' immaculate conception *ad infinitium.* This ridiculous exercise provoked Anatole France to write a story in which a prostitute in Paris kneels before a statue of Virgin Mary and prays, "Holy Mother! You conceived without sinning. Let me sin without conceiving."

It is also significant that all the four female ancestors of Mary mentioned by Matthew in his genealogy of Jesus happen to be fallen women. "Tamar was a temple prostitute; Rahab was

[16] Michael Arnheim, op.cit, pp. 20-21.

the madam of a brothel; Ruth, the most moral, indulged in some pretty shameless sexual exploitation; and Bathsheba committed adultery with King David. Was the author of the Matthew genealogy implying something about the only other woman mentioned, Mary herself?"[17] In any case, a clear reference to the circumstances of Jesus' birth is found in the gospel of John (8.41) where, in a heated debate between Jesus and the Jews on the Mount of Olives, the latter fling at him the taunt that "we were not born of fornication".

The real reason for floating the myth of virgin birth seems to be that "there had always been a question mark hanging over Mary's sexual morality" and that "it was clearly a subject which caused the early Christians acute embarrassment".[18] In fact, there has been a long-standing tradition among the Jews that Jesus was the fruit of an adulterous union between Mary and a Roman soldier named Panthera. The story had also spread to the Pagans in the ancient world. Origen found the Roman philosopher Celsus referring to it in his anti-Christian polemics around AD 178.

Christians have tended to dismiss the story as a malicious piece of invention, suggesting that Panthera may have been a corruption of *'parthenos'* meaning virgin. "Intriguingly, their interpretation fell a little flat with the discovery at Bingerbruck in Germany of the tombstone of one Tiberius Julius Abdes Panthera, a Roman archer from Sidon in Phoenicia. Although it would be fanciful seriously to suggest that Panthera was Jesus' real father, the tombstone does happen to date from the appropriate early Roman Imperial period."[19]

This "unfortunate circumstance" of Jesus' birth may explain his hostility to his mother and lack of enthusiasm for his brothers. In John (2.3-4) we find him giving short shrift to his mother at the marriage in Cana. In Luke (11.27-28) there is more than a hint that Jesus did not consider his mother among those "who hear the word of God and keep it". In Matthew (12.46-50), Mark (3.31-35), and Luke (8.19-21) he shows no warmth for Mary and

[17] Ian Stephens, op. cit., p. 56.
[18] Michael Arnheim, op. cit., p. 20.
[19] Ian Wilson, op. cit., pp 55-56.

his brothers who come all the way from Nazareth to Capernaum to pay him a visit.[20]

I may comment at this point that as a Hindu I do not consider Jesus' unconventional birth a reflection on his character as a worthy teacher, assuming that he was one. Marriage is after all only a social convention, and it does not necessarily put the stamp of nobility on those who are born "legitimately". Nor does birth outside wedlock detract from the moral or spiritual worth of a person. I have discussed the dogma of virgin birth at some length simply because Catholic theologians insist on presenting it as a historical event. It is a different question altogether whether Jesus was endowed with moral and spiritual qualities such as can distinguish him as a great teacher. I shall take up this question at a later stage in this book.

5. *Ministry:* The gospels tell us very little about the life of Jesus between his birth and his baptism by John the Baptist. Matthew informs us of Joseph's flight to Egypt along with Mary and Jesus in order to escape the massacre of infants by King Herod, and his return, after Herod's death, to the land of Israel where he withdrew himself to Nazareth in Galilee. Luke mentions no flight to Egypt. He keeps Jesus in Bethlehem all the time so that he is circumcised when he is eight days old, and taken to the temple at Jerusalem where he is hailed as the saviour by Simeon and Anna the prophetess. Another detail which Luke adds is that Jesus gave a slip to his parents when he was taken to the same temple at the age of twelve, and that he stayed back to converse with the priests who were charmed by his intelligence. That is all we are told about his life during the seventeen or more years before he begins as a preacher.

Obviously, the gospel writers are interested only in his ministry as the Messiah. But here too the accounts differ. If we leave out the miracles and the parables, the biographical data we are left with is very meagre indeed. The total record of his doings covers only eight days. About the duration of his ministry also there are two traditions. One tradition says that it lasted for three years, another says for one year. The only points which emerge

[20] Michael Arnheim, op cit, p 26.

with some prominence are that he preached to some gatherings of people at a few places on his way from Galilee to Jerusalem, was arrested and tried, and crucified along with two bandits.

6. *Trial by the Jews*: All the four gospels say that Jesus was tried for blasphemy by the Jewish authorities at Jerusalem before he was handed over to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. But they differ materially on details.

Matthew tells us that he was brought to the palace of Caiaphas, the chief priest, when the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish Council, was gathered in a night session. Witnesses were produced to give testimony against him, including the one who said that Jesus had threatened to destroy the temple at Jerusalem. Jesus remained silent about all these accusations, but replied in the affirmative when he was asked if he was the Messiah. The death sentence against him was, however, passed when the Sanhedrin met again in a morning session next day. Then the Jews handed him over to Pontius Pilate.

Mark repeats the same story with the difference that the death sentence is awarded in the night session itself.

Luke says that the Sanhedrin met not in the night of his arrest but next morning, and Jesus affirmed before it not only that he was the Messiah but also that he was the Son of God. The Sanhedrin, however, passed no sentence, the judges saying merely that their suspicions about Jesus had been confirmed by his confession. Another point on which Luke differs from the other three gospels is that after Jesus was handed over to Pontius Pilate, the latter referred his case to Herod Antipas because as a Galilean Jesus came under Herod's jurisdiction. Herod asked Jesus to perform miracles and plied him with questions. But when Jesus remained silent, he also joined the Jews in pouring contempt on Jesus and handed him back to Pontius Pilate.

In John's gospel there is no Sanhedrin in session. Jesus is produced before Anna, the father-in-law of the chief priest. It is, however, the chief priest himself who questions Jesus about the latter's disciples and teaching. Jesus replies that there was nothing secret about either as he was going about with his disciples all over the place and preaching publicly. He is then handed over

to Pontius Pilate to whom the Jews declare that they had no power to put anyone to death.

Jewish scholars have examined the gospel accounts in the light of Jewish laws and administration prevailing in Palestine at the time Jesus is supposed to have been tried by the Jewish authorities. They have come to the conclusion that the whole story of Jesus being tried by the Jewish authorities for blasphemy sounds spurious. Firstly, they hold that in terms of the Jewish law it was not blasphemy for any Jew to claim to be the Messiah or the Son of God. Secondly, they point out that sessions of the Sanhedrin could not be held at the times and in the ways mentioned in the three gospels. Finally, they maintain that if Jesus had been found guilty of blasphemy for saying something which is not mentioned in the gospels, the Jewish authorities at Jerusalem were quite competent to get him stoned to death, the penalty prescribed by Jewish law, and were not at all called upon to hand him over to the Roman governor for getting him crucified. The very fact that Jesus was crucified and not stoned to death goes to prove that he must have violated a Roman and not a Jewish law.[21]

Interestingly, the Pontius Pilate of history we meet in authentic Roman accounts is not at all the kind-hearted character we meet in the gospels; he was a cruel and blood-thirsty man who seldom stopped from committing gruesome atrocities.

"All the four gospels," observes Michael Arnheim, "agree in pinning the blame on the Jews and in exonerating Pontius Pilate, but disagree on practically everything else. In other words, their conclusions agree, but not the evidence adduced in support of those conclusions... In short, it would appear that the gospel writers first reached their conclusion (namely, that Jews were guilty of Jesus' 'murder') and only afterwards put together a story to support this conclusion."[22] James P. Mackey remarks, "Finally, we are reminded by more than one exegete that we dare not ignore the increasing apologetic tendency of the gospel writ-

[21] Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus,* Berlin, 1961, is one of the major studies which present the Jewish point of view.

[22] Michael Arnheim, op. cit., pp 83-84.

ers to shift the blame for the death of Jesus from the Romans, whose empire the Christians by this time were trying to win for the faith, to the Jews. This apologetic interest, undoubtedly, would certainly account for the addition, as time went on, of more and more narrative details to the Jewish involvement in the death of Jesus and hence to the Jewish trial or hearing."[23] "In other words, by means of suppression on the one hand and invention on the other, they [the gospels] create the impression that the 'Jewish trial' was the real trial."[24]

It is, however, not the historicity of the so-called Jewish trial but the theology to which it gave birth, which invites greater attention. It is because of this spurious story that all through nearly two thousand years of Christian history, Jews have been accused of deicide and subjected in practically all Christian countries to cruel pogroms which culminated in the Nazi Holocaust. The gospel writers can, therefore, he held guilty of committing one of the greatest crimes against humanity in inventing this history. John (8.44) goes to the extent of labeling the Jews as sons of the Devil!

The less said about the ridiculousness of the theology itself, the better. If Jesus was the Son of God who was sent down specifically for the purpose of washing the sins of mankind with his blood by mounting the cross, knowingly and willingly, the Jew should have been glorified for helping the divine plan, even if unknowingly, assuming that they did connive at his death. On the other hand, Pontius Pilate should have been condemned in the strongest language for trying to frustrate what God had himself designed in his supreme wisdom. But what we find in Christian theology is the other way round. The Jews have been painted in the darkest colours, while Pontius Pilate "missed canonization" because "the Edict of Milan (312) made it unnecessary for the Church to have in Pilate a witness that 'found no guilt in this man".[25]

7. *The Crucifixion:* All the four gospels agree that Jesus was

[23] James P. Mackey, *Jesus the Man and the Myth*, London, 1979, pp. 63-64.
[24] Michael Arnheim, op. cit., p. 92.
[25] Paul Winter, op. cit, p. 6.

awarded a typically Roman punishment, crucifixion. But they differ in details.

According to John, the day on which he was arrested was the day before the Passover (14th Nisan). According to the other three gospels, it was the day after the Passover (15th Nisan).

According to Matthew and Mark, it was the Roman soldiers who carried him to Golgotha and crucified him. According to Luke and John, he was carried there and crucified by the Jews.

In Matthew and Mark, it is the Jewish soldiers who mock at and molest Jesus on the way to Golgotha. In Luke, it is a multitude of people, particularly women, who weep and wail at his fate and whom Jesus asks to weep for themselves and their children as he sees an imminent doom descending on them. In John, the scene on the way to Golgotha is not mentioned at all.

Again, in Matthew, Mark and Luke, the cross is carried by Simon of Cyrene, while in John it is carried by Jesus himself.

Matthew, Luke and John do not mention the time at which, Jesus was raised to the cross. Mark says that it was nine in the morning.

In Matthew, the two bandits crucified with Jesus make fun of him. In Luke while one of the bandits pleads that Jesus should save him from death, the other seeks from Jesus a promise for the life after death.

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus cries loudly on the cross, “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?” but does not die immediately. In Luke, he cries “Father! Into your hands I commit my spirit,” and expires. In John, he says simply that “it is now completed”, and dies.

The time of Jesus’ death is also different in the two sets of gospels. In Matthew, Mark and Luke, it occurs at three o’clock in the afternoon when darkness falls on the whole land, and it is late in the afternoon when Joseph of Arimathea takes down Jesus’ body from the cross. In John, it is already evening when a Roman soldier is ordered to break Jesus’ legs in order to expedite his death, and finds him already dead.

There are some other details also on which the gospels differ. Some scholars have doubted the whole story of Jesus’ cru-

cifixion. They point to Acts 5.30 and 13.29 which say that Jesus was hanged on and taken down dead from a tree.[26] An apocryphal Christian apocalypse, *The Ascension of Isaiah* composed in stages during the first and second centuries, also says that he was "crucified on the tree". This is in conformity with the Jewish tradition which tells us that Jesus was first bound to a pillar and scourged, then stoned to death, and finally hanged on a tree.[27]

The Jewish tradition acquires weight when we find that the cross appears quite late as a Christian symbol. The Roman cross on which Jesus is supposed to have been crucified was not at all like the one represented by Christian painters. The Christian cross, in fact, is patterned after the mystic cross which we find in Egyptian hieroglyphics dated to an era long before Jesus is supposed to have been crucified. We do not meet this Christian cross among Christian symbols till Helena, the mother of Constantine, travelled to Jerusalem in 337 and "discovered the true cross". And it was not until the Council of Constantinople held in 692 AD that the Church pronounced the cross as real and not symbolic. The story that the cross had appeared to Constantine in 312 AD on the eve of the Battle of the Mulvian Bridge is pure fiction.

Joan Taylor to whom we have referred earlier in this chapter, finds that the Holy Cross Church at Jerusalem has been built after demolishing a temple dedicated to Venus, a Pagan Goddess of ancient Greece and Rome. The crime was committed at the behest of Constantine, the Roman emperor who converted to Christianity, simply because his mother, Helena, saw in a dream that Jesus had been crucified at that place. Constantine's minions had no problem in "unearthing" a cross and claiming the site. We have many instances of such crosses being "unearthed" in South India, particularly at places where St. Thomas is supposed to

---

[26] The Authorised Version of the Bible contains the word "tree" in both Acts 5.30 and 13.29. It is only in latter-day translations that "tree" has been replaced by "gibbet" or "cross". One wonders whether the replacement is not another piece of jugglery for which Christian scribes are famous.

[27] *The Jewish Life of Christ* Being the *Sepher Toldoth Jeshu* or *Book of the Generation of Jesus* translated from the Hebrew by G.W. Foote & J.M. Wheeler, 1982, III. 30-49.

have built the first seven churches.

8. *Resurrection*: We are entitled to dismiss the gospel stories of Resurrection like the rest of Jesus' miracles. We are entitled not to treat it as history at all. But as Resurrection happens to be the core of the Christian creed, we will better see what sort of puerile invention it is. Inventors of falsehood enjoy an advantage over tellers of truth, especially when the inventors become powerful and wield big guns and/or weapons of big propaganda. Tellers of truth are forced to discuss the fictions floated by the inventors of falsehood.

Scholars who date some epistles of Paul as earlier than the gospels regard this man as the first propounder of Resurrection. "Now if Christ is preached," he wrote to the Corinthians in 49 AD, "as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; *if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.* We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised."[28] The ifs and buts used by Paul in this statement go to show that for him Resurrection was the starting point of a story which had yet to be concocted and that to start with there were few buyers for this starting point.

Some theologians have tried to interpret Paul as saying that the risen Christ was not a being of flesh and blood but a spiritual being. But that would mean dismissing the whole of the New Testament and well-nigh two thousand years of Christian tradition. In fact, Paul himself seems to repeat the gospel accounts when he says earlier in the same epistle that Jesus appeared after his death first to Cephas, then to the twelve disciples, then to more than five hundred people, then to James, then to all the apostles, and lastly to him.[29]

Before we take up the gospel accounts of Resurrection, we may point out that, according to scholars, Jesus' appearance after his death (16.9-20) formed no part of the original gospel of Mark

[28] 1 Cor. 15 12-15, emphasis added.

[29] Ibid., 15.3-8.

and has been appended to it later. "This is in itself peculiar. If Jesus *had* been raised from the dead and *had* appeared to some of his chief disciples, then surely Mark could not have failed to record it. The fact that this had to be tacked by someone else also indicates that Jesus' appearance and ascension were *not* known to Mark, whose Gospel, it is generally agreed, was written about thirty years after Jesus' death. In other words, the story of a raised Jesus appearing to his disciples and others and then ascending to heaven was only invented a generation or more after the events were supposed to have occurred."[30]

Now we can take up the accounts of Resurrection as we find them in the existing four gospels.

Matthew presents only a brief account in his Chapter 28. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus go out to the tomb where Jesus had been buried by Joseph of Arimathea. Suddenly, there is an earthquake, an angel descends from heaven, he rolls away the stone from the mouth of the tomb, and he sits down on it. The guards appointed to look after the tomb are terrified and become like dead. But the angel assures the ladies and tells them that Jesus has risen and gone to Galilee. He also invites them to enter the tomb. The ladies, however, rush back to inform the disciples. Jesus appears to them on the way and instructs them to tell the disciples to meet him in Galilee. Meanwhile, the guards recover their wits and report the matter to the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. The Jewish chiefs bribe the guards to spread the story that Jesus' disciples have stolen the body. The disciples, however, rush to the mountain in Galilee and meet Jesus. They are in a repentant mood for having run away while he was being arrested. Jesus tells them that he has absolute authority on earth and in heaven, that they should baptise all nations in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that he is with them till the end of the world.

Chapter 16 in Mark is equally brief. Here the two women become three, with Salome added. They go to the tomb with spices in order to anoint Jesus' body but are worried about the heavy stone at the mouth of the tomb. They are surprised when

[30] Michael Arnheim, op. cit., p. 74. Emphasis in the original.

they find the stone rolled back. They enter the tomb, but get frightened when they see a young man dressed in white sitting where the body should have been. The young man reassures them and tells them to inform the disciples that Jesus has risen and proceeded to Galilee as he had promised before he died. They run out of the tomb panic-stricken, and do not say a word to anyone. This is the point where the original Mark ends. In the interpolation, Mary Magdalene is alone and Jesus appears to her but gives her no instruction about informing the disciples or telling them that he is going to Galilee. She goes on her own to inform the disciples who refuse to believe her. Meanwhile, Jesus meets some travellers who get back to inform the disciples. Once again, the disciples refuse to believe the story. Finally, Jesus himself appears before the eleven disciples and rebukes them for their want of faith and hardness of heart. He instructs them to go out into the whole world and preach the gospel to all creation. He imparts to them the power to perform miracles such as driving out the demons, speaking in new tongues, picking up serpents, drinking poison, and curing the sick so that people may believe in their Master who alone can save. Jesus then starts rising aloft to heaven till he gets seated at the right hand of God.

Luke's Chapter 24 is much longer. Here there are several women including those who are named — Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of Jesus. They go with spices to anoint the body of Jesus. They find the stone rolled back, and enter the tomb. They see two men sitting there, dressed in dazzling clothes. They feel frightened but are reassured and told that Jesus has risen and gone to Galilee as he had promised in his lifetime. The ladies go back and inform the eleven disciples, all of whom except Peter dismiss them as fools. But Peter runs to the tomb, and is followed by the rest. They find nothing there except some linen cloths. Two of the disciples then travel towards the town of Emmaus the same day, and meet and converse with Jesus on the way without recognizing him. They tell him of his death, and of the report brought back by the women about the disappearance of his body from the tomb. Arriving near the

town, they invite him to be their guest. It is only when he breaks bread in their home and passes portions to them that their eyes are opened. But he vanishes. The two rush back to Jerusalem and report it to the others. While they are still talking about the event, Jesus walks in. He shows them his hands and feet and asks them to feel his body in order to find out that he is flesh and bones and no ghost. They continue to disbelieve him till Jesus asks for food and starts eating the broiled fish they offer to him. He then preaches to them about the prophecy which has been fulfilled, and instructs them to start preaching the same. It seems that he stays with them for a few days because the account says that one day he led them to Bethany, blessed them, and then ascended into heaven.

The account in John's gospel is the longest and covers two whole chapters, 20 and 21. At the end the writer identifies himself as an eye-witness to what he has described.

To start with Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb all alone and, finding the stone rolled back, rushes back to Peter and John with the report. Both of them go to the tomb and enter it only to find nothing except some linen cloth at one place and a scarf which Jesus had wrapped round his head at another. But Mary Magdalene who is waiting outside the tomb and shedding tears, sees two angles in white robes as soon as she peeps in. The angles ask her why she is weeping. She tells them that her Master's body has disappeared, and finds Jesus standing by her side as soon as she turns back. She recognises him only when he speaks to her in Hebrew. He instructs her to go back and inform the disciples as there is still some time before he ascends to heaven. Apparently, Peter and John had gone back by this time.

Mary carries the message to the disciples who are sitting in a room bolted from the inside for fear of the Jew. All of a sudden Jesus himself walks in without knocking or the door being opened. The disciples are delighted. He tells them that they are his ambassadors and invests them with the Holy Spirit. Thomas is not among them at this time, and when he is told about Jesus' appearance he refuses to believe till he has touched with his own finger one of the wounds caused by nails driven into Jesus'

hands at the time of crucifixion. Eight days later Jesus walks in again into their bolted room. Thomas is present and Jesus asks him to touch a wound with his finger. He is reported as giving them many other proofs of his presence in flesh and bones but these are not detailed in the gospel.

"On a later occasion" Jesus meets the disciples on the Lake of Tiberias where they have gone fishing. Their nets remain empty till the morning when Jesus fills them with fish. They find him sitting with them for breakfast. But all except Peter fail to recognize him till he distributes pieces of bread and fish among them. Breakfast over, Jesus asks Peter thrice if the latter really loves him. Peter assures him thrice and gets appointed as the shepherd of his sheep. Jesus asks Peter to follow him, but as Peter does so he finds John doing the same. Peter does not like it, and refers the matter to Jesus. He is told by Jesus to let it be because John is to stay till Jesus' next return. What happened next is anybody's guess. John ends the story with Peter and himself following Jesus.

"There seems even less prospect," observes James P. Mackey, "of arriving at a concordant account of the details of the appearances of Jesus than there is in the case of the empty tomb stories, when at least Mary Magdalene is consistently a principal character. That has to be recognized at the very outset. Apart from the major discrepancy amongst the gospels as to whether the appearances of Jesus took place in Galilee or in and around Jerusalem, all the appearance stories have different settings, details and messages. As Reumann, I think, it was, pointed out, there is not even, as in the case of passion narratives, an agreed framework for the appearance narratives within which discrepancies of detail occur and by comparison to which they could reasonably he counted as negligible..."[31]

"The embarrassment," comments Michael Arnheim, "which Jesus' death occasioned his disciples must have been acute, and it comes through very clearly in Paul's creed in which he twice specifically links Jesus' death with Jewish prophecy 'Christ died for our sins *in accordance* with the scriptures' and 'he was raised

[31] James P. Mackey, op. cit., p. 108.

on the third day *in accordance* with the scriptures' (my emphasis; 1 Cor. 15: 3-4; cf. Acts 13:27-9). Which scriptures is Paul referring to? There is this verse in the prophet Hosea: 'after two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him' (Hosea 6:2). But the reference here is not to resurrection at all, but rather to God's reconciliation with the Jewish people after punishing them. Hosea, it must be stressed, was writing some seven hundred years before the time of Jesus and his prophecy must be understood in terms of the circumstances of his own day, a time when there were still two independent Jewish kingdoms, Judea and Israel, but when their independence was threatened from without by powerful foreign states and, as the prophet saw it, by moral and religious decay from within."[32]

The Jewish tradition also confirms that Resurrection and Ascension were only stories invented and spread by the disciples. According to this tradition, Judas, the resourceful Jew, who had captured Jesus, the evil magician, and helped the Jewish elders kill and bury him, became suspicious when he saw Jesus' disciples sitting round the tomb during the night. So he removed the body from the tomb and buried it elsewhere. Next morning the disciples came to the tomb again and, finding it empty, started crying out that Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended unto heaven. Judas produced the body from its hiding place so that it was tied to a horse's tail and dragged around for some time. But Paul, the apostate disciple of Rabbi Gamaliel, took the false story of Resurrection to Rome and spread it there.[33]

The Jewish tradition is also confirmed by Acts 13.29 which states quite clearly that Jesus' body was buried by the Jews themselves and not by Joseph of Arimathea who appears like a *deus ex machina* in the gospels.

9. *Character of the Gospels:* The writer of John's gospel declares at the end of his account (21.24) that "This is the disciple who is both witness of these facts and the recorder of these facts; and we know that his testimony is true". The same claim

[32] Miachael Arnheim, op. cit., p. 78.

[33] *The Jewish Life of Christ,* op. cit., III. 51-81, IV. 46-55.

of being eye-witness accounts is advanced by Christian apologetics on behalf of the other three gospels, though the gospels themselves do not say so. We have, however, seen that the gospels contradict and cancel out each other when it comes to the salient features in the story of Jesus — the date and year and place of his birth, his ancestry and parentage, his ministry, his trial and death, and his resurrection. This claim on behalf the gospels, therefore, falls to the ground.

In fact, this claim was dismissed most forcefully by David Friedrich Strauss who published his two-volume work, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined,* in 1835-36. "Because of the discrepancies he found, he cogently argued that none of the gospels could have been by eye-witnesses, but instead must have been the work of writers of a much later generation, freely constructing their material from probably garbled traditions about Jesus in circulation in the early Church."[34]

The gospel of Luke provides a first-hand refutation of this claim when it says (1.1-4) that many attempts have been made to present the story of Jesus "so as to accord with the tradition which the original eye-witnesses and ministers of the gospel have handed down to us". He informs Theophilus that his own account conforms to the "oral instruction you have already received".

Even the names by which the gospels are known today have been found to be later inventions. "Few realize, for instance, that despite the fact that the canonical gospels bear the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, these names are mere attributions, and not necessarily those of their real authors. The earliest writers who referred to the gospels significantly failed to mention names of authors, it being apparent that each gospel, both those surviving and those that have failed to survive, was originally designed as *the* gospel for a particular community. A canon of the four 'recognized' gospels only gradually came with general usage, at the same time acquiring associations with specific names from Christianity's earliest years, though the connection was not necessarily legitimate."[35] For all we know, Matthew,

[34] Ian Wilson, op. cit., p.33.

[35] Ibid., p. 30.

Mark, Luke and John may be mere names rather than real characters who actually lived and wrote in the remote past.

Mark's gospel is now supposed to be the earliest of the four. But no scholar today concedes that it was written soon after the supposed lifetime of Jesus, or in the country where Jesus is supposed to have functioned. "The Evangelist betrays in 7:31 an ignorance of Palestinian geography hardly compatible with the assumption that he lived anywhere near the country. The Christian community for which he wrote is so remote from Jewish ideas that he has laboriously to explain Jewish practices... Such passages also betray that in Mark's day, the freedom of gentile communities from the Jewish law was taken for granted, and that he wrote considerably later than Paul for whom this matter was still a burning issue."[36] This remoteness from the Jewish environment is even more manifest in the gospel of John. "Throughout the fourth gospel Jesus speaks of the Jewish law as if he himself is not a Jew and had no connection with it (8:17; 15:25). For John he is no Jew, but a divine personage who existed before the Jewish nation came into being..."[37]

It is significant that Christian writers before 100 AD quote the Old Testament quite often but never the New Testament. Obviously, the material of the New Testament including the gospels was either in a formative stage, or was not deemed authentic enough to enjoy the prestige of scriptural authority. In any case, the existing codices of the gospels do not "take us further back than the days of Jerome and Augustine, still leaving a huge 300-year gap".[38] The original compositions that might have existed at earlier dates were thus "exposed to two centuries of errors in transcriptions, and to possible alterations to suit the theology or aims of the copyist's sect or time".[39]

The gospels cannot, therefore, he accepted as reflecting the time and clime in which Jesus is supposed to have lived and functioned. What they represent are the beliefs held by certain Christian communities in the middle of the third century AD.

[36] G.A. Wells, op. cit., p. 78.
[37] Ibid , p. 92.
[38] Paul Johnson, op. cit., p. 26.
[39] Will Durant, op. cit., p. 555.

There is also plenty of evidence that the gospels have been subjected to considerable editing in course of time. Passages have been interpolated as well as expunged. It is now well known that Mark 16.9-20 referring to Jesus' appearance after death and the world mission of Christianity, have been added at a later stage. The original gospel comes to an end at 16.8 in the ancient manuscripts. The most scandalous instance of an expunction came to the notice of Professor Morton Smith of the Columbia University while he was staying at Jerusalem in 1958. He discovered in a monastery the correspondence between Bishop Clement of Alexandria who lived at the end of the first century AD and a contemporary character, Theodore. It concerned a passage that followed immediately after Mark 10.46 which makes Jesus arrive at and leave Jericho. Scholars were puzzled for centuries as to what happened at that place, but there was no clue. The correspondence between Clement and Theodore contains the passage which had been censored out of Mark for fear of raising a scandal. The passage says that Jesus spent several days and nights with Lazarus, both of them remaining naked. It seems that homosexuals in the first century Christians churches were citing this passage in support of their practice, as homosexuals in the churches are doing today.

The New English Bible version of the New Testament published jointly by Oxford and Cambridge universities in 1961 mentions many instances where passages have been inserted or taken out. The most significant example is that of John 8.11 which tells the story of how Jesus saved from being stoned a woman caught in adultery. "This passage, which in the most widely received editions of the New Testament is printed in the text of John 7.53-8.11, has no fixed place in our ancient manuscripts. Some of them do not contain it at all. Some place it after Luke 21.38, others after John 7.36 or 7.52, or 21.24."[40] In any case, the story does not occur in any manuscript prior to the end of the fourth century. Scholars are now agreed that it is an interpolation. Similar is the case of Luke 23.34 where Jesus is made to cry from the cross, "Father, forgive them; they do not know

[40] The New English Bible, New Testament, 1961, p. 184n.

what they are doing." Incidentally, these are precisely the two statements, apart from the Sermon on the Mount, which the Hindu admirers of Jesus quote most frequently. No Christian missionary or theologian is known to have informed them that they form no part of the authenticated teachings of Jesus.

What scholars have come to suspect the most, apart from the miracles, are the Old Testament prophecies which abound in the gospels. Almost every event in Jesus' life, from birth to death, is presented as fulfillment of some prophecy. Michael Arnheim has devoted a whole chapter (the Sixth) of his book to this subject. "One of the chief concerns — if not *the* chief concern — of the Gospels is to 'prove' that Jesus was the Messiah *as prophesied* in the Jewish *scriptures.* There are essentially two ways in which they set about doing this, depending upon the need of the case ... either to bring your story into line with the prophecy or to interpret the prophecy in such a way as to bring *it* into conformity with the story."[41] He has analysed the various prophecies in order to show which of the two ways has been followed in which case. He has also found instances in which both the ways have been used.

In one case the misinterpretation of a prophecy (Zechariah 9.9) has created a ludicrous scene — that of Jesus riding into Jerusalem not on one but on two asses simultaneously! It seems that the gospel writers did not understand the device of parallelism so often employed in Hebrew poetry. Zechariah never meant that the Messiah would ride on two asses at the same time. In the words of Morna Hooker, "They tear passages out of context, use allegory or typology to give old stories new meanings, contradict the plain meaning of the text, find references to Christ in passages where the original authors never intended any, and adapt or even alter the wording in order to make it yield the meaning they require."[42]

Still more curious is the case of a prophecy which cannot be found in the Old Testament. Mathew (2.23) says that Jesus will

[41] Michael Arnheim, op. cit, p. 101 Emphasis in the original.
[42] Cited by G.A. Wells, op. cit., p.204, note 20, with reference to Morna D. Hooker, 'Beyond the Things that are Written? St. Paul's Use of Scripture', in *New Testament Studies,* 27 (1985).

be called a Nazarene in fulfillment of a prophecy. Commentators on this verse have searched the Old Testament for centuries but have so far failed to locate the prophecy!

James P. Mackey has shown that it is the passion narratives which make more use of Old Testament prophecies than any other part of the gospels. "Are we to take it," he asks, "that concrete details just mentioned actually took place in the course of the arrest, trial and execution of Jesus, and then it was found that Old Testament passages anticipated them with astounding accuracy? Or are we to take it that the followers of Jesus, wishing to show their fellow Jews that Jesus in his passion fully fitted the character of the obedient servant of Yahweh... used the techniques of subliminal persuasion and painted the picture of Jesus' passion in terms literally reminiscent of the composite Old Testament character so that concrete details like those briefly recorded above were carried into the passion narrative by these techniques? There can scarcely be any doubt that in many cases of detail, if not in most, the latter is the less naive explanation..."[43]

No responsible theologian or historian is now prepared to construct the life-story of Jesus from material provided by the gospels. Will Durant who has done so has nonetheless, this to say: "Matthew relies more than the other evangelists on the miracles ascribed to Jesus, and is suspiciously eager to prove that many Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in Christ... The Fourth Gospel does not pretend to be a biography of Jesus; it is a presentation of Christ from the theological point of view, as the divine Logos or Word, creator of the world and redeemer of mankind. It contradicts the synoptic gospels in a hundred details and in its general picture of Christ... In summary, it is clear that there are many contradictions between one gospel and another, many dubious statements of history, many suspicious resemblances to the legends told of pagan gods, many incidents apparently designed to prove the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, many passages possibly aiming to establish a historical basis for some later doctrine or ritual of the Church."[44] According to some

[43] James P. Mackey, op cit., pp 61-62.
[44] Will Durant, op. cit., pp 556-57.

critics, "Jesus has become a bin into which a theologian can cast his own notions."[45]

Paul Johnson observes, "When we turn to the earliest Christian sources, we enter a terrifying jungle of scholarly contradictions. All were writing evangelism or theology rather than history, even when, like Luke in his gospel, they assume the literary manners of a historian and seek to anchor the events of Jesus' life in secular chronology. Moreover, all the documents have a long pre-history before they reached written form. Their evaluation was a source of acute puzzlement to thoughtful Christians even in the earliest decades of the second century and probably before..."[46]

In the case of Mark, he finds that "The text was much altered and interpolated during the earliest period" and he feels that John is "more of a theological exercise than a historical narrative".[47] He concludes that the gospel texts are full of fabrications. "The earlier they were inserted, the more difficult it is to detect them. And, of course, beyond a certain point, which occurs in the second century, there is no longer any possibility of clearing up the text. Moreover, even if we were to have the perfect and original texts of the gospels, they would not protect us from the efforts to create 'constructive truth' made by the evangelists themselves, and their oral sources. These are particularly obvious when the evangelists are engaged in aligning or shaping events in Jesus' life to fit Old Testament prophesies: there the temptation to create and so to falsify is obvious, and we are on our guard..."[48]

In the considered opinion of Ian Wilson, a practising Catholic, "it does not need anyone with a Ph.D. in theology to recognize that the Christian gospels can scarcely be the infallible works fundamentalists would have us believe".[49] This is exactly what St. Augustine had meant when he said in the fourth century that "only on the authority of the Church could he believe the

[45] Georges Ory, op. cit., p. 25.
[46] Paul Johnson, op. cit., 22.
[47] Ibid., p. 25.
[48] Ibid., p. 27.
[49] Ian Wilson, op. cit., p. 30.

gospels".[50]

Summing Up

This being the character of the gospels, the search for a Jesus of history in them has had to be given up. It may be noted that the search was started and continued not by atheists or anti-Christians of any type but by pious theologians whose aim was to install Jesus on the firm ground of recorded history and thus fortify the fundamental Christian belief that Christianity is a historical and not a mythological faith. They cannot he blamed if the results of Christological research have turned out to be disastrous for Christianity, as we shall see.

Albert Schweitzer, the world famous theologian and missionary, has traced in a well-known book published in 1906 the progress of Christology from Hermann Samuel Reimarus, who wrote in the middle of the eighteenth century, to Wilhelm Wrede whose book on this subject was published in 1901. "The study of the Life of Jesus," he says, "has had a curious history. It set out in quest of the historical Jesus, believing that when it had found Him it could bring Him straight into our time as a Teacher and Saviour..."[51] Coming to the "Results", he mourns, "There is nothing more negative than the result of the critical study of the Life of Jesus. The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, never had any existence. This image has not been destroyed from without. It has fallen to pieces, cleft and disintegrated by the concrete historical problems which came to the surface one after another, and in spite of all the artifice, art, artificiality, and violence which was applied to them, refused to be planed down to fit the design on which Jesus of the theology of the last hundred and thirty years had been constructed and were no sooner covered over than they appeared again in a new form.."[52] He concludes, "We thought that it was

[50] Georges Ory, op. cit., p. 39.
[51] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* (1906), English translation, London, 1910, Reprint, 1945, p. 397.
[52] Ibid., p. 396.

for us to lead our time by the roundabout way through the historical Jesus, as we understood Him, in order to bring it to the Jesus who is a spiritual power in the present. This roundabout way has now been closed by genuine history."[53]

James P. Mackey confirms Schweitzer. "It was just about two centuries ago," he says, "that people began to pride themselves on the bringing at last to academic Christology the scientific methods of the historian. Previous to the eighteenth century, it was felt, people had built their portraits of Jesus from all kinds of unscientific assumptions. Small wonder if false Christs had appeared in Christian devotion and Christian literature. Small wonder if different Christs had appeared at different times and places or in different Christian traditions. The modern quarters set out with the calm confidence that by the use of the trusty methods of scientific history the real Jesus could at last be made to stand up. And with the same calm confidence they produced first one portrait of Jesus... and then another... and then another, each disturbingly different from the one before... Pessimism spread far beyond the confines of professional scholarship: the 'real Jesus' could not really be found..."[54]

Pope Leo X had confessed in the early sixteenth century that "It has served us well, this myth of Christ".[55] Now that the myth was getting exploded, Pope Pius X condemned in 1907 the Modernists who "were working within the framework of the Church" and "an anti-Modernist oath was introduced in 1910".[56]

But that did not stop the Modernists. The last nail in the coffin which carried the Jesus of history was hammered home by Rudolf Bultmann, Professor in the Marburg University of Germany and acknowledged as the greatest New Testament theologian of the twentieth century. "I do indeed think," he concluded in 1958, "that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and legendary."[57]

[53] Ibid., p. 398.
[54] James P. Mackey, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
[55] Michael Baigent et al, *The Messianic Legacy,* Corgi Books, London, 1987, p.14.
[56] Ibid., p. 15.
[57] Cited by Ian Wilson, op. cit., p. 37.

Bultmann was only endorsing what another German theologian, Bruno Bauer, had said a hundred years earlier. According to Albert Schweitzer, Bauer had concluded in 1850-51: "The question which has so much exercised the minds of men — whether Jesus was the historic Christ (= Messiah) — is answered in the sense that everything that is said of Him, everything that is known of Him, belongs to the world of imagination, that is, of the imagination of the Christian community, and therefore has nothing to do with any man who belongs to the real world."[58]

The story has not changed in the years since Bultmann gave his verdict. Pastor J. Kahl pronounced in 1967 that "nothing at all is known of Jesus beyond the bare fact that 'he existed at a date and place which can be established approximately' and that both his teaching and manner of death remain unknown so that 'the name of Jesus is bound to remain cryptic and meaningless, indistinguishable from a myth'."[59]

Professor W. Trilling came to the conclusion in 1969 that "not a single date in his life can be determined with certainty" and wondered why "with modern scientific methods and enormous labour and ingenuity, so little has been established".[60]

Summarizing the surveys of Christology since Bultmann G.A. Wells observed in 1986: "During the past thirty years theologian have come increasingly to admit that it is no longer possible to write a biography of him, since documents earlier than the gospels tell us next to nothing of his life, while the gospels present the 'kerygma' or proclamation of faith not the Jesus of history. Many contemporary theologians therefore regard the quest of the historical Jesus as both hopeless and religiously irrelevant — in that *the few things which can, allegedly, be known of his life are unedifying and do not make him an appropriate object of worship."*[61]

There is now no dearth of scholars who think that the Jesus

[58] Albert Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 156.
[59] G.A. Wells, op. cit., p. 2.
[60] Ibid., p. 1.
[61] Ibid., with particular reference to *The Church and Jesus* (London, 1969) by Rev. F.G. Downing and *In Search of the Historical Jesus* (London, 1970) edited by H. McArthur. Emphasis added.

of the gospels never existed in history. H. Raschke wrote quite some time ago that "the historical existence of Jesus need not be denied as it has never been affirmed".[62] G.A. Wells has continued to examine the arguments of those who are still out to prop up a Jesus of history. He has written three challenging books in 1971, 1982 and 1986. In his latest book he concludes that "The existence of strongly divergent Christologies in early Christian times is a strong argument against Jesus' historicity", and that "if he had really lived, early Christian literature would not 'show nearly everywhere churchly and theological conflicts and fierce quarrels between opponents' nor disagree so radically as to what kind of person he was".[63]

[62] Georges Cry, op. cit., p. 25.
[63] G.A. Wells, op., cit., p. 120 with particular reference to Prof. E. Kasemann's articles on the historicity of Jesus.

Chapter 2
Jesus of Fiction

As the Jesus of History started fading away fast as a result of researches in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, the Jesus of Fiction came increasingly to the fore. The process was helped a good deal by the knowledge which the modern West was acquiring at the same time about the ancient world. India, China, Iran, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Palestine and Greece of antiquity were no more being seen through the glasses of Christian theology or in the light of the Christian missionary lore. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Library after the Second World War provided a new background for ancient Palestine at the period when Jesus is supposed to have functioned. "As a result, Jesus is no longer a shadowy figure existing in the simplistic fairy-tale world of the Gospels. Palestine at the advent of the Christian era is no longer a nebulous place belonging more to myth than to history. On the contrary, we now know a great deal about Jesus's milieu, and far more than most practising Christians realise about Palestine in the first century — its sociology, its economy, its politics, its cultural and religious character, its historical actuality."[1]

Scholars and story-tellers have been using every bit of historical information, every contradiction and contrary hint, every faint figure, and even stray sentences in the gospels for presenting Jesus in novel and strange, even startling, ways.

Looking at the plethora of publications which have been pouring in during the twentieth century, we find two types of literature on the subject. A majority of writers think that no matter how heavy the theological rubble happens to be, the "real" Jesus buried under it can be rescued and made to live on the stage of history. On the other hand, there is a minority of scholars who feel that no matter whether a man called Jesus existed or not, the Jesus of the gospels is a synthetic product fashioned out of diverse materials floating in the Mediterranean

[1] Michael Baigent et al, op. cit, pp.17-18.

world around the time he is supposed to have functioned. I give below a brief survey of the literature of both varieties that I have read or references to which I have noticed.

The "real" Jesus Stories

The ball regarding the "real" Jesus was set rolling by *The Aims of Jesus and His Disciples* by Hermann Samuel Reimarus, published posthumously from Brunswick (Germany) in 1778. Taking his cue from Jesus' anguished cry from the cross — "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?" — Reimarus had observed, "This avowal cannot, without violence, be interpreted, otherwise than as meaning that God had not sided with Him in His aim and purpose as He had hoped. This shows that it had not been His purpose to suffer and die, but to establish an earthly kingdom and deliver the Jews from political oppression — and in that God's help had failed Him."[2] His disciples, however, had become used to making a living by "preaching of the Kingdom of God" and "forgotten how to work". They were not prepared to renounce "this mode of life". They felt sure that they could "find a sufficient number of faithful souls who would join them in directing their hopes towards a second coming of the Messiah" and "share their possessions with them" in expectation of future glory. "So they stole the body of Jesus and hid it, and proclaimed to all the world that he would soon return. They prudently waited, however, for fifty days before making this announcement, in order that the body, if it should be found, might be unrecognisable."[1]

The next in the series of what Schweitzer names as "The Earliest Fictitious Lives of Jesus", was *An Explanation of the Plans and Aims of Jesus* by Friedrich Barhdt, published in II volumes from Berlin between 1784 and 1792. The cue in this case was provided by Nicodamus who figures in John's gospel and Joseph of Arimathea whom we meet in all the four gospels. They were, according to Barhdt, leading members of a Secret Brotherhood, the Essenes, which had its cells in all ranks of the

[2] Cited in Albert Schweitzer, op cit., pp 19-20

[3] Ibid, p.21.

Jewish society at that time. The Brotherhood was out to destroy the false Messianic hopes harboured by the Jews, and thus foster a rational religion. They were in search of a character who could be made to masquerade as the Messiah, and give currency to the Brotherhood's teachings. They found in Jesus what they were looking for, and stage-managed him in a series of dramatic episodes. The miracles of Jesus were calculated frauds masterminded by the two string-pullers and foisted on a superstitions population with the help of the widespread Essenes network. They also tricked the Sanhedrin into trying Jesus for rebellion and condemning him to death. At the same time they saw to it that Jesus did not hang on the cross for long. Luke had stuffed him with drugs so that he did not feel the pain of crucifixion. In any case, he was instructed to cry aloud and hang his head after a short while so that he could he declared dead and taken down quickly. They put him in a tomb which had been prepared in advance. "Since the humours of the body were in a thoroughly healthy condition, His wounds healed very readily, and by the third day He was able to walk, in spite of the fact that the wounds made by the nails were still open."[4] Jesus came out of the tomb and met Mary Magdalene whom he bade tell His disciples that he had risen, and was going to his Father in Heaven before long. He appeared to them several times from his place of concealment till he took leave of them at the Mount of Olives near Bethany. "From the mountain He returned to the chief lodge of the Brotherhood. Only at rare intervals did He again intervene in active life — as on the occasion when He appeared to Paul upon the road to Damascus. But though unseen, He continued to direct the destinies of the community until His death."[5]

More or less the same pattern in presenting the "real" Jesus was followed by Karl Heinrich Venturini who published anonymously his work, *A Non-supernatural History of the Prophet of Nazareth*, in 4 volumes from Copenhagen (Denmark) during 1800-1802. In his story too Jesus is stage-managed by a secret society in order to destroy the false Messianic hopes of the Jews.

[4] Cited in Ibid., p.43.

[5] Ibid., pp.43-44.

His miracles are nothing more than cures effected by a "portable medical chest" which he carries secreted in his robe. His disciples are always ready at hand to distract the attention of the audience so that genuine medical treatments look like miracles. But the miracles failed to impress the Jews, and in due course Jesus also became disillusioned with the secret society. So the society decided that Jesus be taken to Jerusalem and made to proclaim publicly that he was the Messiah. He was hailed by the people of Jerusalem, but the Jewish authorities refused to change their notions about Messiahship. They arrested him all of a sudden and put him to death. Joseph of Arimathea who washed and anointed his body saw some hope in the fresh blood flowing from the wound in his side. So the body was not buried but kept under watch for twenty-four hours after which Jesus revived. He was removed to the Lodge of the secret society, and made to appear at intervals to his disciples. His strength, however, got exhausted after forty days when he took final leave of his disciples. "The farewell scene gave rise to the mistaken impression of his Ascension."[6]

Charles Christian Hennell, August Friedrich Gfrorer, and Richard von der Aim (pseudonym of Friedrich Wilhelm Ghillany), whose works were published in Germany between 1831 and 1863, presented Jesus along the same lines as those of Barhdt and Venturini. It was Ludwig Noack who struck a different note in his book, *The History of Jesus,* published in 1876. "Jesus' temperament, according to Noack was pre-disposed to ecstasy, since He was born out of wedlock... Assailed in a thousand ways by the cruelty of the world, it would seem to Him as though His Heavenly Father, though unseen, was stretching out to Him the arms of consolation." He became acquainted with Greek ideas about sons of God as also with Philo's doctrine of the Logos.[7] "Ambition, too, came into play — the high ambition to do God a service by offering up of Himself. The passion of self-sacrifice is characteristic of a consciousness such as this... From the first He was as much at home with the thought of death

6 Ibid., p.47.

7 Ibid., p.177.

as with His Heavenly Father."[8] His adversaries, however, refused to concede his claim that he was the Son of God. They tried to stone him to death so that he had to go into hiding. "Judas, the disciple whom Jesus loved, who was a man of much resource, helped Him to avoid being arrested as a disturber of the peace by arranging that the 'betrayal' should take place on the evening before the Passover, in order that Jesus might die, as He desired, on the day of the Passover. For this service of love, he was.... torn from the bosom of the Lord and branded as a traitor."[9] So Jesus really died, and did not rise on the third day. Like Earnet Renan who had published his highly sentimental *Life of Jesus* in 1863, Noack had no use for resurrection and ascension.

Towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century appeared some Lives of Jesus which presented him as a hypnotist or occultist. In his *Jesus of Nazareth* published from Leipzig (Germany) Paul de Regla stated that Jesus was born out of wedlock but was given shelter by Joseph because he was an exceptionally beautiful child. When he grew up, he attracted the Essenes as his disciples. "His preaching dealt with the rights of man, and put forward socialistic and communistic demands."[10] He knew hypnotism and used this art to stage miracles. He was not dead when he was taken down from the cross, and was reanimated by the Essenes.

Emile Lerou, a French lady, used a pseudonym, Pierre Nahor, when she published her *Jesus* in 1905. In this, a distinguished Brahmin from India had sizable property in Nazareth, and an influential following in Jerusalem. He took Jesus to Egypt and taught him Indian philosophy as well as hypnotism. Jesus cured Mary Magdalene, a distinguished courtesan of Tiberias, and thus acquired great hold over rich and pious ladies. They sent to him baskets of food which his disciples distributed to people. When Jesus came to know that "the priests were resolved upon His death, He made His friend Joseph of Arimathea, a leading man among the Essenes, promise that he would take Him down from

[8] Ibid., p.178.
[9] Ibid., p.179.
[10] Ibid., p.325.

the cross as soon as possible and lay him in the grave without other witnesses". And while he was on the cross, "He put Himself in a cataleptic trance" so that he looked like dead, and was taken down quickly. He revived in the tomb, and appeared several times to his disciples. But he had been badly hurt. He dragged himself to Nazareth and died at the door of his Brahmin teacher from India.[11]

The one thing which these "real" Jesus stories in the nineteenth century had in common was that they presented him as a great leader, on his own or as the mouthpiece of some secret society. The stories that started coming out in the twentieth century acquired an altogether different tone. Christian apologists continued to paint Jesus, historical or otherwise, in attractive colours. But the stories that stole the show had a character to the contrary. The "real" Jesus was more and more brought down to earth in a manner that proved pretty painful, even alarming, to the believing Christian. I am summarising some of these stories in a chronological order.

1905, G.L.Loostan, *Jesus Christ from the Psychiatrist's Viewpoint,* Bamberg (Germany), 1905.

1910, W. Hirsch, *Religion and Civilization,* Munich (Germany), 1908,

1912, C. Binet-Sangle, *Jesus Madness,* Paris, 1912.

"After a thorough examination of the Gospel narratives, they independently reached the same conclusion: Jesus was mentally ill and suffered from *paranoia",* a mental disease defined as "the sneaking development of a persistent and unassailable delusion system, in which clarity of thought and action are nonetheless preserved."[12]

1906, George Moore, *The Brook Kerith,* London, *1916.*

The author "caused considerable scandal by depicting Jesus as surviving the Crucifixion, and being nursed back to health by

[11] Ibid., p.326.

[12] Koenraad Elst, *Psychology of Prophetism: A Secular Look at the Bible,* Voice of India, New Delhi, 1993, pp.78-79.

Joseph of Arimathea".[13] But Moore cited in support of his story some of the oldest Christian heresies and the Quran, all of which proclaimed that Jesus had not died on the cross.

1929, D.H. Lawrence, *The Man Who Died,* London, 1929.

It was a short story originally named *The Escaped Cock.* "Jesus was taken down too early from the cross, revived in the tomb, petrified his followers, who assumed he was dead, 'resurrected', and slipped away to Egypt to enjoy conjugal relations with a priestess of Isis."[14] It was at the "climatic moment" in the "sexual congress" that he declared, "I am risen."[15]

1931, R. Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist,* London, 1931.

Piecing together some scattered information in the gospels, the author presented Jesus as the leader of armed bandits. He relied on the Jewish tradition preserved in *Toldoth Jeshu,* particularly on a passage preserved in a fifth-century Hebrew version of Josephus, stating that "Jesus had more than 2000 armed followers with him on the Mount of Olives".[16]

1946, Wilhelm Lange-Eichbaum, *Genius, Madness and Fame,* Germany, 1946 .

In a chapter, "The Problem of Jesus", the author said that Jesus of the gospels betrays "quick-tempered soreness and a remarkable ego-centricism", and that "what is not with him, is cursed". Jesus "loves everything that is below him and does not diminish his ego" but "utters threats against everyone who is established, powerful, and rich". He is also "a sexually abnormal man" and there is in him ""a lack of joy in reality, extreme seriousness, lack of humour, a predominantly depressed, disturbed, tense condition, coldness towards others insofar as they do not flatter his ego" including his mother and brothers. His "lack of balance" makes him "now weak and fearful, now with violent

13 Michael Baigent et al., op. cit., p. 15.
14 Ian Wilsm, op. cit. p. 118 and 171.
15 Michael Baigent et al., op.cit., p.37.
16 G.A. Wells, op. cit., p.172.

outbursts of anger". The psychiatrist concluded that Jesus was suffering from paranoia.[17]

1946, Robert Graves, *King Jesus,* London, 1946. The author showed Jesus as surviving the crucifixion and living as a lover of Mary Magdalene.

1950, Morris Goldstein, *Jesus in the Jewish Tradition,* New York, 1950.

The well-known American Rabbi presented Jewish traditions vis-a-vis several Jesuses and inferred that the Jesus of Christianity could be the Jeshu who "was stoned and hanged because he practised sorcery and led Israel astray". Nobody was prepared to defend him although "for forty days before the execution, a herald unsuccessfully urged people who knew anything in his favour to come forward".[18]

1954, Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Last Temptation of Christ,* New York, 1954

This was written by a Greek author who had won the Nobel prize in literature for his earlier work. In this novel, Jesus dies on the cross. "Before he does so, however, he has a vision of what his life should have been had he not voluntarily submitted himself to his final sacrifice. In this vision — a kind of 'flash-forward' in fantasy — Jesus sees himself married to the Magdalene (for whom he has lusted all through the book) and fathering a family upon her."[19] The plot also shows Judas betraying Jesus at the latter's express command. Some critics thought that this was "a passionately religious, passionately devotional, passionately Christian" piece of literature. "Nevertheless, the novel was banned in many countries, including the author's native Greece, and Kazantzakis himself was excommunicated."[20]

[17] Koenraad Elst, op. cit. pp.80-81.

[18] G.A. Wells, op. cit.. p.16.

[19] Michael Baigent et al., op. cit., p.16.

[20] Ibid., p. 19.

1956, Albert Camus, *The Fall,* Paris, 1956.

The famous French author had the following passage in a dialogue: “Say, do you know why he was crucified — the one you are perhaps thinking of at the moment? Well, there were heaps of reasons for that ... But, besides the reasons that have been very well explained to us for the past two thousand years, there was a major one for that terrible agony, and I don’t know why it has been so carefully hidden. The real reason is that he knew he was not altogether innocent.”[21]

1960, Hugh Montefiore, ‘Jesus, the Revelation of God’, in *Christ For Us Today,* London, 1960.

“Inspired by certain mysterious references such as the ‘disciple Jesus loved...: leaning back on Jesus’ breast’ (John 13:23-25), in the 1960s Anglican Bishop Hugh Montefiore put forward the idea that Jesus might have been a homosexual as ‘an explanation we must not ignore’.”[22]

1961, Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus,* Berlin, 1961.

He analyses the gospel materials in detail and proves that the Jewish authorities did not condemn Jesus to death, though they were quite competent to do so if they had found him guilty of blasphemy. They handed him to Pontius Pilate simply because they were afraid that his activities might lead to an insurrection and bring about a heavy-handed Roman intervention.

1963, J. Carmichael, *The Death of Jesus,* London, 1963.

He showed that Jesus was a guerrilla leader who first collaborated and then broke with another Jewish rebel, John the Baptist. John recognized his superiority when he seized the temple in Jerusalem as a preliminary to seizing the city and leading an anti-Roman uprising. But the Roman soldiers stormed the temple and Jesus had to go into hiding from where he was betrayed by Judas. He was then crucified by the Romans along with other leaders of the rebellion. He cites Sossianus Hierocles, the prefect

21 Cited in James P. Mackey, op. cit., pp.71-72.

22 Ian Wilson, op. cit., p.80.

of Egypt who wrote in the reign of Diocletian (245-315 AD) and who had stated that "Jesus was the leader of a band of highway robbers numbering more than 900 men", and also a lost version of Josephus which stated that "Jesus had more than 2,000 armed followers with him on the Mount of Olives".[23]

1963, Hugh Schonfield, *The Passover Plot,* London, 1963.

This international best-seller of which more than three million copies have been sold shows that Jesus arranged his own mock crucifixion in order to pass as the Messiah according to the prophecy in the Old Testament. The crucifixion was arranged by Joseph of Arimathea who gave him a drug in a sponge in order to induce the appearance of death. The plan was to take him inside the well-prepared tomb, and revive him. But the plan misfired because of the lance-thrust by the Roman soldier in Jesus' side. Jesus died and was buried secretly elsewhere. The man seen by Mary Magdalene standing by her side was not Jesus but someone else who had come to help in reviving Jesus. It was a case of mistaken identity. There was no resurrection.

1965, Samuel Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus,* London, 1965.

This Professor of Biblical Studies in the Jewish Institute of Religion in London, had protested indignantly against Paul's view, parroted by Christian tradition, that the Jewish Law at the time of Jesus was sterile, and had become a burden so that Jews were ready to be liberated from it. He took great pride in the ancient Jewish Law, and dismissed Jesus as someone whom the Jews did not care to remember.

1967, S.G.F Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots,* Manchester, 1967.

1968, S.G.F Brandon, *The Trial of Jesus,* Manchester, 1968

This Professor in the University of Manchester, England,

argued that Jesus was an ardent Jewish nationalist who led a rebellion against the Romans. The inscription — King of Jews — affixed to the cross was genuine because it occurs in all the

[23] G.A. Wells, op. cit., pp. 170-72.

gospels. He had many Zealots among his disciples, including Judas Iscariot. He failed, and was crucified by the Romans. This was the whole story. Jesus, the risen Christ and Saviour, was an invention of Paul for the consumption of Gentiles.

1969, S.S. Levin, *Jesus alias Christ,* New York, 1969.

He argued that "the miracles, ethical teachings, and warnings that the world will shortly come to a catastrophic end are wrongly ascribed to Jesus in the gospels, and in fact represent actions and sayings of John the Baptist".[24] Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was a political demonstration, and his effort to clean the temple was an effort to seize it after surveying its defences. But the Romans foiled his insurrection, and crucified him. That was his end.

1970, Carlo Fuento, *Terra Nostra,* New York, 1970.

The Mexican novelist showed that Jesus survived the "fraudulent crucifixion" which involved a substitute, and was no saviour.

1970, W.E. Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?,* New York, 1970.

The author, a Professor of Theology, proved that Mary Magdalene was married to Jesus, particularly with reference to the recently discovered Gospel of Philip which preserves a tradition that she was his spouse.

1970, Carlyle Slaughter, *Magdalene,* London 1970.

It is a novel which presents Mary Magdalene as a lover of Jesus.

1971, Haim Cohn, *The Trial and Death of Jesus,* New York, 1971.

Cohn was an ex-attorney-general of Israel and a member of its Supreme Court when he wrote this book. He dismissed the Jewish trial and condemnation of Jesus as a ridiculous fiction. The Jewish authorities, in fact, had tried to save him by advising

[24] Ibid., p.173.

him not to proclaim himself as the Messiah. It was Jesus who invited death by such a proclamation before Pilate. So crucifixion is the central theme in the story of Jesus. He was killed by the Romans. And he was not buried because victims of crucifixion were not allowed that rite.

1973 Haim Maccoby, *Revolution in Judea: Jesus and the Jewish Resistance,* London, 1973.

He showed that the first-century generation of Jews which Christian tradition has blackened as "wicked" was, in fact, "the greatest generation in Jewish religious history", and that "to dissociate themselves from this generation would be for the Jews to dissociate themselves from Judaism".[25] For him Jesus was a Jewish revolutionary who "staged an uprising against the Roman" after the precedent set by Judas of Galilee in 6 AD. Kingdom of God meant an independent Jewish state. Pilate was cruel by nature, and crucified Jesus. The gospels were written by "death-worshipping mystagogues" who "exalted the Roman cross into a religious symbol" and "saw more meaning in Jesus' death than in his life".[26] He names Paul as the chief culprit in this conspiracy.

1973 W.E. Phipps, *The Sexuality of Jesus,* New York, 1973.

He says that according to the Mishnaic law an unmarried Jew could not be a teacher. So Jesus was married, and Mary Magdelene was his wife. Analysing John 20.17, he concludes that here Jesus asks Mary to cease from sexual intercourse in which they used to be engaged earlier.

1973, J.A.T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God,* London, 1973.

This Dean of Trinity College, Cambridge, says that Jesus' birth through normal sex is not ruled out by the gospels. It is clear that Joseph was not the father of Jesus but it does not mean that there was no "prior intercourse between Mary and some unknown male which Joseph subsequently condones".[27]

[24] Ibid., p.173.
[25] Ian Wilson, op. cit., p. 152.
[26] G.A. Wells, op. cit., 162.
[27] Ibid., p.8.

1973, Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and the Secret Gospel of Mark,* Harvard (USA), 1973.

"In 1958...Professor Morton Smith of Columbia University discovered, in a monastery near Jerusalem, a letter which contained a missing fragment of the Gospel of Mark. The missing fragment had not been lost. On the contrary, it had apparently been deliberately suppressed — at the instigation, if not the express behest, of Bishop Clement of Alexandria, one of the most venerated of the early Church fathers."[28] The fragment showed Jesus and Lazarus spending several days and nights together in a state of utter nakedness. The Bishop had received a complaint that this episode in the gospel was enabling some heretic sects to indulge in immoral practices. Professor Smith published the fragment with the historical background, and opined that the "whole episode refers to a typical mystery initiation".[29]

1973, G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew,* London, 1973

This Reader in Jewish Studies in the University of Oxford maintained that Jesus was very much a Jew in all his doings and sayings, and a great teacher. He was not a guerrilla leader. He could not have been tried by the Jews for blasphemy which he had never committed. The gospel accounts of a Jewish trial of Jesus must have been invented by Hellenized Jews like Paul. Jesus was persecuted and executed by the Romans.

1974, Morton Smith, *The Secret Gospel,* London 1974.

"Dr. Smith has interpreted Jesus as a hedonistic libertine.

Smith imparts a heavy sexual innuendo to the nudity of the baptismal rite he believes Jesus to have practised, and suggests that, transported by his experiences of the Kingdom of God, Jesus thought himself above the constraints of the Jewish law, and able to do as he pleased."[10]

28 Michael Baigent et el, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail,* Corgi Books, London, 1984, p. 334.

29 Ibid., p. 337.

30 Ian Wilson, op. cit, p. 82

1975, Donovan Joyce, *The Jesus Scroll,* London, 1975.

The author, an Australian journalist, claims to have seen a scroll stolen from the Masada excavations. "It was signed *Yeshua ben Ya'akob ben Gennesareth* who described himself as eighty years old and added that he was the last of the rightful kings of Israel. The name when translated into English became Jesus of Gennesareth, son of Jacob. Joyce identifies the author as Jesus of Nazareth." It means that Jesus survived the crucifixion, and fought in the Roman siege of Masada during the Jewish revolt of 66-74 AD.[31]

1976. Mariana Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: Myth and the Cult of Virgin Mary,* London, 1976.

"Mary Warner begins with the gospels, noting the slight allusions to Mary and the curious confusions between the two women of that name. She points out the falsities, fables and manifest fabrications that have shaped mariolatry."[32]

1978, Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician,* London, 1978.

"Dr. Morton Smith depicts his protagonist as a typical wonder-worker of the age, a figure of a kind that thronged the Middle East at the beginning of the Christian era."[33]

1980, Liz Green, *The Dreamer* of *the Vine,* 1980. It is a novel about Nostradamus in which Jesus is shown as a married man who leaves a bloodline.

1982, Michael Baigent et el, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail,* London, 1984.

After examining critically a plethora of literature on the "real" Jesus, the authors conclude that Jesus was descended from King David and, therefore, a legitimate priest-king of Israel who came in conflict with the Romans. But his powerful friends "working in collusion with a corrupt, easily bribed Roman

[31] Michael Baigent et al, *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail,* op. cit, p.513.
[32] Review reproduced at the back cover of the book.
[33] Michael Baigent et al, *The Messianic Legacy,* p 17.

Procurator, appear to have engineered a mock crucifixion — on private grounds, inaccessible to all but a select few". Keeping the general population "at a convenient distance, an execution was then staged — in which a substitute took the priest-king's place on the cross, or in which the priest-king himself did not actually die". When it was sufficiently dark and visibility became low "a 'body' was removed to an opportunely adjacent tomb, from which a day or two later, it 'miraculously' disappeared". He was already married to Mary Magdalene and he now escaped to some other place to live secretly and sire children who were moved to France and founded the Carolingian Dynasty. The disciples of Jesus and, later on, the Church suppressed the true story, and invented a Jesus who was made the founder of Christianity. So Jesus of history has very little to do with the Jesus of the gospels and the churches.

1983, Anita Mason, *The Illusionist,* London, 1983.

It is a novel in which Simon Peter is shown as a "simple, untutored Galilean fisherman and bully" who accepted literally Jesus' statements about an imminent end of the world. When nothing happened after Jesus' crucifixion, Peter was a tormented man — full of doubt and disillusionment himself, but sticking to his story before the other disciples of Jesus. Paul rescued Peter out of this predicament by inventing a new theology. It was on this theology that Peter founded his Church, which carried forward the conspiracy.

1984, Michael Arnhein, *Is Christianity True?,* London, 1984.

The author teaches at St. John's College in the University of Cambridge. While travelling on a train, he heard a passenger declare that decimalisation of the coinage was one of the three "biggest 'cons' in history." "What were the other two, I immediately enquired, and quick as a flash came the reply, the graduated pension fund an 'JC. I was stunned. 'JC I repeated quizzically. 'Yes, Jesus Christ of course.' And in what order should these three biggest-ever confidence tricks be placed? On this point my Mancunian fellow-traveller was equally forthcoming: 'JC —

number One.'" With this preface, the author examines the "historical improbability: namely that one particular man was no mere mortal but 'the Christ', whose death changed the course of human history for ever, and who continues to exist as 'God the son', part of an indivisible threefold godhead". Going over the evidence produced by Christian theologians in support of this fantastic belief, the author concludes that the Messianic claim for Jesus cannot be reconciled with the claim that he is the Son of God, that there was nothing divine in Jesus, and that Christianity has been a Big Lie in telling which Adolf Hitler was the latest expert.

1984, Ian Wilson, *Jesus: The Evidence*, London, 1984.

It was published as a companion volume to a television documentary of the same name announced by David Rolfe in 1983. "The series took no position of its own, endorsed no particular point of view. It simply endeavoured to survey the field of New Testament studies and to assess the value of various theories proposed. Yet even before the project got under way, British pressure groups were lobbying to have the enterprise suppressed. When it was finished in 1984, it had to be screened, in a private showing, to a number of Members of Parliament before it could be cleared for transmission." The author of the book adds a chapter, "The Real Jesus", in which he says, "Here was nothing about a call for belief in himself as mankind's saviour, nothing about a new religion that he wanted instituted in his name." Jesus would not have endorsed the Nicene Creed "formulated in his name three hundred years later" because "the Jewish faith was the absolute bedrock of his belief. A special feature of this book is an attempt to explain Jesus' miracles as feats of hypnosis. Even the resurrection is explained as the effect, on Jesus' disciples, of a post-hypnotic suggestion.

1985, Anthony Burgess, *The Kingdom of the Wicked*, London, 1985.

The author carried forward Anita Mason's thesis that Jesus of the gospels was invented by the Church which has been a

conspiracy of the wicked from the very beginning.

1985. Michele Roberts, *The Wild Girl,* London 1985.

The novel depicts Mary Magdalene as Jesus' lover and as the mother of his child. It invited the wrath of the Church in England and the author was threatened with persecution under Britain's blasphemy law.

1986, Michael Baigent et al, *The Messianic Legacy,* London, 1986.

The authors carry forward the theme they propounded in *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail.* More stories about the "real" Jesus are examined and a tentative hypothesis is advanced regarding the formation of Christianity. One thing which comes out clearly is that Jesus the founder of a bloodline was not the founder of this faith.

1986, Herman H. Somers, *Jesus the Messiah: Was Christianity a Mistake* (in Dutch), Antwerp, 1986

The author is a renowned theologian who served in the Jesuit order for forty years. In due course, he developed serious doubts about the divine character of the Bible, grew out of his faith in Christianity, and left the Jesuit order. His study of Jesus is a part of his study of the psychology of prophetism, which he finds paranoid. The prophets of the Bible, he says, were mentally sick people, and Jesus was no exception. Jesus did not die on the cross. He was alive when he was taken down, and was revived. He went into hiding and wrote the Revelation or Apocalypse, the last and the most blood-thirsty book of the New Testament, credited by Christian tradition to John, the beloved disciple of Jesus. This book of the Bible leaves little doubt that its author was a mentally sick man.[34]

1994, John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography,* San Francisco (USA), 1994.

[34] Somer's study has been summarised by Koenraad Elst in his *Psychology of Prophetisim: A Secular Look at the Bible,* published by Voice of India in 1993.

The author is a Bible scholar at De Paul University in Chicago, Illinois, USA. "For Crossan Jesus' deification was akin to the worship of Augustus Caesar — a mixture of myth, propaganda, and social convention. It was simply a thing that was done in the Mediterranean world. Christ's pedigree — his virgin birth in Bethlehem of Judea, home of his reputed ancestor King David — is retrospective myth-making by writers who had 'already decided on the transcendental importance of the adult Jesus,' Crossan says. The journey to Bethlehem from Nazareth, he adds, is 'pure fiction, a creation of Luke's own imagination.' He speculates that Jesus may not even have been Mary's firstborn and that the man the Bible calls his brother James was the eldest child." Jesus never cured anyone. He was a wandering teacher for whom Roman imperialism was demonic possession. "Believing that such wanderlust spread subversion, the Romans had him crucified. Jesus — a peasant nobody — was never buried, never taken by his friends to a rich man's sepulcher. Rather, says Crossan, the tales of entombment and resurrection were latter-day wishful thinking. Instead, Jesus' corpse went the way of all abandoned criminals' bodies: it was probably barely covered with dirt, vulnerable to the wild dogs that roamed the wasteland of the execution grounds."[35]

Jesus as Synthetic Product

Many scholars in the moderns West have noted that the entire paraphernalia — virgin birth, baptism by water, miracles, parables, anointing, twelve apostles, trial, last supper, betrayal passion, execution, resurrection, ascension — with which Jesus is equipped in the gospels can be traced back to magic rites, mystery cults, mythologies, religions, and philosophies prevailing in this or that country in the ancient world since long before Jesus is supposed to have been born. And they have concluded that Jesus was a myth manufactured by the early evangelists in order to serve the superstitious inclinations of various communities in the Roman empire. Some weight is lent to this proposition by the weak welding which holds together the different compo-

[35] *Time* weekly magazine, New York, 10 January 1994.

nents of the Jesus cult. It seems that the men who crafted the myth were neither precise in their design nor skilful enough to endow the finished product with a semblance of reality.

Volney of France was perhaps the first to propound in the eighteenth century that "Jesus was a solar myth derived from Krishna" of Hindu mythology.[36] He was followed by Ernest Renan, the famous Catholic theologian from France, who pointed out Buddhist parallels in the parables of Jesus in his *Life of Jesus* published in 1863. In 1883, Max Muller noted "startling coincidences between Buddhism and Christianity in his *India: What it can teach us,* published from England. He wondered about the channels through which Buddhist lore could have travelled to the Mediterranean world, but at the same time he drew attention to the fact that "Buddhism existed at least four hundred years before Christianity".[37] Another French theologian, Ernest Havet, did the same in his study of primitive Christianity published in 1884. A stronger case along the same lines was made by Rudolf Seydel, Professor in the University of Leipzig (Germany), whose first book, *The Gospel of Jesus in relation to the Buddha Legend,* published in 1882, was followed by a more elaborate one, *The Buddha Legend and the Life of Jesus,* published in 1897.[38] Finally, J.M. Robertson, a British scholar and a Member of Parliament, revived the Volney thesis in 1900 by stating in his *Christianity and Mythology* that "the Christ-Myth is merely a form of the Krishna-Myth".[39] Many more books on the myth of Jesus have come out since then, and we have yet to see the end of similar literature. I give below brief descriptions of the few books which I have read or references to which I have noticed.

1903, G. R. S. Meade, *Did Jesus Live 100 B.C.?,* London, 1903

"The author compares the Christian tradition with the Jew-

[36] Hector Hawton, in his Introduction to a reprint of *Pagan Christs* by J.M. Roberston, New York, 1966, p.5.

[37] Albert Schweitzer, op. cit., p.290.

[38] Ibid., p.290 fn.

[39] Ibid., p.290-91fn.

ish, and finds in the latter a reminiscence of a Jesus who lived in the time of Alexander Jannaeus (104-76 B.C.). This person was transferred by the earliest evangelists to the later period, the attempt being facilitated by the fact that during the procuratorship of Pilate a false prophet had attracted some attention."[40] Josephus, the historian of the Jews, had written that Alexander Jannaeus used to crucify Jews. G.A. Wells observes, "Jannaeus' crucifixion of eight hundred Pharisees left a particularly strong impression on the Jewish world...In this connection it is of interest that the dating of Jesus as a heretic who was put to death for misleading people about 100 BC, under Jannaeus, is 'one of the most persistent elements of the Jewish tradition concerning Jesus' and 'goes back to the floating mass of tradition' from which the Talmud drew. Mead allows that this dating may have originated as a result of controversy between orthodox Jews and Christians of Pauline type whose Christianity comprised a 'minimum of history and a maximum of opposition to Jewish legalism'."[41]

1903, J.M. Robertson, *Pagan Christs,* London, 1903.

"Robertson's most distinctive thesis is that the Gospel story of the Last Supper, the Agony, the Betrayal, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection was a mystery play which came to be accepted as an account of real happenings. The origin of this ritual drama is an ancient Palestinian rite in which an annual victim known as 'Jesus (Joshua) the Son of the Father' was actually sacrificed."[42]

1912, William Benjamin Smith, *Ecce Deus: Studies of Primitive Christianity,* London, 1912.

"In the development of the drama of salvation there were many mythologic elements that lay at hand, not a few venerable in their antiquity, descended from Nippur and Babylon, from the Tigris and the Euphrates, and possibly from the Indus and the Ganges. It would be strange if these had not suggested or shaped

40 Ibid., p. 327.
41 G.A. Wells, op. cit., pp. 198-99.
42 Hector Hawton, op. cit., p. 5.

or coloured some of the incidents and delineations and even thought-elements elaborated in the Gospels, in the New Testament, in early Christian literature, faith and worship."[43] What was needed was a cult round which these components could cluster. "There must have been a pre-Christian cult of a pre-Christian divinity. This hypothesis is absolutely unavoidable. It meets you full in the face whatever way you turn. Moreover, it is overwhelmingly attested by the New Testament itself which clearly shows that the cult was esoteric long before it became exoteric..."[44]

1944, W.L. Knox, *Some Hellenistic Elements in Primitive Christianity,* London, 1944.

The author sees the birth of Christianity in the decline of communal or national and the rise of personal religion in the Graeco-Roman world. "Knox notes that the same idea can be found in the pagan mystery cults of the period; and he infers that the concern of both Christian and pagan cults with personal religion was leading in the theology which explained them, to the independent development of such metaphors."[45]

1948, H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods,* Chicago, 1948.

1951, H. Frankfort, *The Problem of Similarity in Ancient Near Eastern Religions,* Oxford, 1951.

The author was Director of the Warburg Institute. His thesis was that in hot climates the withering and blooming of Nature in quick succession created the idea of gods who died and rose again. This idea lost its connection with Nature when transplanted among impoverished urban populations, and gave rise to a religion of resurrection.[46]

1953, Sir H. Idris Bell, *Cults and Creeds in the Graeco-Roman Egypt,* Liverpool, 1948 Reader in Papyrology in the University of Oxford, this au-

[41] William Benjamin Smith, op.cit., p. 66.
[44] Ibid., pp. 74-75.
[45] G.A. Wells, op. cit., p. 181.
[46] Ibid., pp. 180-81.

thor repeated the thesis of W. L. Knox but emphasized that the cults prevalent in ancient Egypt provided the central substance to the Jesus myth.

1955, B.M. Metzger, 'Mystery Religions and Early Christianity', in the *Harvard Theological Review,* 49, 1955

This Professor of New Testament at the Princeton University observed that "in the East three days constitute a temporary habitation, while the fourth day implies a permanent residence" and inferred that Paul's formula may be to "convey the assurance that Jesus would be but a visitor in the house of the dead but not in permanent resident therein".[47] He saw in the Christian eucharist a parallel with initiation in Mithraism.

1958, Rev. E.O. James, *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East*, London, 1958

In the opinion of this Professor of History and Philosophy of Religion in the University of London, the ancient Middle East abounded in gods like Osiris and Tammuz who had been on earth to suffer, die and rise again. This provides "an intelligible origin of religious ideas which are otherwise hard to explain".[48]

1958, S. G. F. Brandon, 'The Myth and Ritual Position', in *Myth, Ritual and Kingship* edited by S.H. Hooker, Oxford, 1958.

The author was a Professor of Comparative Religion in the University of Manchester and wrote several remarkable books on the subject of Jesus Christ. He saw in Christianity concepts which were alien to the Jewish religion but akin to the cult of Osiris in ancient Egypt, and concluded that Osiris "the vegetation god *par excellence* of Egypt" became "the Saviour to whom men and women turned for assurance of immortality". He also pointed out that the Christian baptismal ritual was patterned after the Osirian ritual.[49]

[47] Ibid., p.31.
[48] Ibid., p. 178.
[49] Ibid., pp. 181 and 184.

1963, A.E. Jensen, *Myth and Culture Among Primitive Peoples,* Chicago and London, 1963.

This Professor of Anthropology in the University of Frankfurt (Germany) saw the origin of the Christian eucharist in primitive cannibalism.

1963, S. G. F.Brandon (ed.), *The Saviour God,* Manchester, 1963.

This book carried articles by Professor Brandon and Professor M. Simon, Professor of History of Religion in Strasburg University. Professor Simon saw in the story of Jesus a parallel to the story of William Tell who never existed but who was nevertheless regarded by many as a historical person. The two professors together developed further Brandon's recurring idea that Jesus was invented after the pattern of ancient saviour gods.

1965, R.H. Fuller, *The Foundations* of *New Testament Christology,* London, 1965.

The author, a Professor of New Testament in the University of Evanston, Illinois, USA, rejects the contention that the pagan cults of saviour gods rose only in second and third centuries of the Christian era. He argues that "this attractive suggestion 'does not quite fit the facts', since mystery cults were active in the very areas missionized by first century Christians: Antioch was in close contiguity with the Adonis cult, Ephesus with the Cybele and Attis cult, Corinth with the Elusinian mysteries".[50]

1970, John Allegro, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross,* London, 1970.

This specialist in Oriental Studies in the University of Manchester "argues in all seriousness that Christianity began as a secret cult of the sacred mushroom, and that the name 'Jesus' was a code-word for this".[51]

[50] Ibid., pp. 182-83.

[51] Ian Wilson, op.cit., p.46.

1979, James P. Mackey, *Jesus the Man and the Myth*, London, 1979.

He is a Professor of Theology in the University of Edinburgh, England, and assumes airs of superiority to the rest of the tribe which is busy with Jesus. But he concedes: "Palestinian Jews sometimes envisaged a better future in messianic terms... Hellenistic Jews, the Jews who had gone abroad into an empire which was Greek in culture...had naturally less interest in messianic or apocalyptic hopes, so they favoured more titles such as Lord, a title which could be conferred on anyone from a freeman, through a Roman Emperor, to a divine saviour of one of the mystery religions, and which was often used in Greek translation of Jewish scriptures for Yahweh himself. Hellenistic Jews would also be familiarized by the Greek scriptures....with the personification of Wisdom as a kind of intermediary between God and this world. Philo, a part contemporary of Jesus, and a very philosophical Jew of Alexandria, had personified the Word or Logos of God and even referred to it as the elder son of God. Finally, in purely Graeco-Roman cultural circles, the conventions of emperor worship...had some of these emperors proclaimed Lords, Gods, Sons of God (if only by apotheosis after death) and Saviours, the gospels or good news of whose coming were heralded by annunciations. There was more, much more; but this gives some idea of the variety of titles which lay ready to hand for preachers of Jesus as they spread out from Palestine to convert the known world to his cause."[52]

1984, Michael Arnheim, *Is Christianity True?*, London, 1984.

The author raises a question: "If Jesus was not the Messiah, what was he? Even his claims to being a great teacher, prophet and ideal human being will not stand up to scrutiny, as we have discovered in the previous chapter. What then is left?" His answer is: "Jesus clearly was the leader of some sort of religious group within Judaism, though how big it was is hard to say. It certainly was by no means the only group of its kind, that of

[52] James P. Mockey, op. cit., pp. 197-98

John the Baptist being another. That Jesus himself claimed to be the Messiah is more than likely. But in this regard too he was not exceptional: there was no shortage of Messianic claimants at the time, and the Baptist may possibly have been one too..."[53] And he concludes, "Why then did Christianity become a new and separate religion? Precisely because the bulk of the Jews were not persuaded of the truth of the claims made for Jesus...Why then were these claims so much more attractive and acceptable to pagan non-Jews? Because pagan religions were not concerned with historical truth and it was in any case a matter of indifference to non-Jews whether Jesus (or anyone else, for that matter) was or was not the Jewish Messiah. What is more, the polytheistic pagan mind did not see the concepts of 'man' and 'god' as separated by the same great and unbridgeable chasm as appeared from the strictly Jewish vantage point. The way was now open for the development of a number of totally un-Jewish and frankly pagan features in Christianity...One distinguishing feature of the new religion which may seem difficult to trace back to polytheistic paganism is Christianity's extreme intolerance...."[54]

The Jesus of Christian theology had continued to spread terror for several centuries. It was quite a relief when critical history abolished him, and emancipated his victims. The Jesus of Fiction proved quite entertaining. People in the modern West have become too fascinated by this human Jesus to care for frowns from the churches and the missions.

[53] Michael Arnheim, op. cit., pp. 154-55.

[54] Ibid., pp. 164-55.

Chapter 3
Christ of Faith

Deprived of the Jesus of history and faced with the Jesus of fiction, the die-hard Christian theologians have had to console themselves and their remaining flock[1] in the West with what they proclaim pompously as the Christ of Faith. They are trying to cover their shattering defeat with a lot of casuistry and some mystagogic phrases from Greek. Shorn of this pretentious window-dressing, the exercise amounts to no more than smuggling in by the backdoor the garbage that has been kicked out from the front. Jesus of faith is the same old guy we have met in the gospels, though somewhat straightened out. Bigotry is back with a bang. Marauders who glorify themselves as missionaries can continue in business with a clean conscience.

Before we start having a close look at this new-fangled fetish, we may put a few questions to the hawkers of this old wine in new bottles.

What has been your Jesus Christ except the Christ of faith, all these two thousand years? Have you ever tried to prove with the support of verifiable experience or honest logic that there is a True One God as opposed to False Many Gods, and that this God is the Creator and Controller of the Cosmos? Have you ever produced even an iota of evidence in support of your proclamation that this True One God sent down his Only-begotten Son in order to wash with his blood the sins of all mankind by mounting the cross? Have you ever cared to convince human reason or even common sense that the man who died on the cross rose on the third day, and that he has been present ever since in history in the form of the Holy Spirit? Have you ever come out with any moral justification in support of your much trumpeted right to impose your abominable superstitions on the rest of mankind by means of force and fraud? In short, have you ever bothered to face, fairly and squarely, any of the numerous questions which heathens in the ancient Roman world and rationalists and hu-

[1] By the beginning of the twentieth century, people in the West were renouncing Christianity in large numbers.

manists in the modern West have posed before you vis-a-vis your dark doctrines and darker history? All that you have always come up with is a broth of paper and ink, eulogised as the Word of God, and backed it up with brute force, military or financial or both.

Tertullian (AD 160-230), the Bishop of Antioch and one of the famous post-apostolic Church Fathers, had been asked by Pagan philosophers in the Roman Empire to prove his case before he pulled a long face and fulminated in the foulest language against those who did not take seriously the Only Saviour he was out to sell. The only response from him was barefaced impudence. "God's son," he said, "died: it is believable because it is absurd. He was buried and rose again: it is certain because it is impossible."[2] As late as 1954, President Eisenhower harangued his people in the United States to have "faith in faith". When asked to define the faith, all he could manage was an equally stupid statement: "Our government makes no sense unless it is based on a deeply-felt religious faith — and I don't care what it is."[3] In other words, he admitted that he was talking arrant nonsense.

In fact, the search for the Jesus of history was launched, as we have pointed out earlier, in the hope that the results will fortify with hard facts and human reason the Jesus Christ whom Christians had so far accepted as a matter of faith. It was not the fault of history that the search proved negative, and instead of propping up the case led to its complete collapse. The salesmen of Jesus Christ should have thrown their discredited totem into the dustbin, and gone in for something more worthwhile. But what they actually did was the other way round. If history, they said, failed to fortify the Christ of faith, to hell with history! That became the stock argument of theologian after theologian. They knew that Jesus Christ was too indispensable for Christian-Western imperialism to be given up simply because straight logic demanded it.

The crisis that was brewing for Christianity had been antici-

2 Will Durant, op. cit., p.613.

3 Paul Johnson, op. cit., p.497.

pated by David Friedrich Strauss in his book, *The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History,* which he published in 1864. It was a sequel to the debate which had been provoked by his first *Life of Jesus* published in two volumes in 1835-36. As the gulf between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith continued to widen, in spite of heroic efforts to bridge it up with linguistic tricks like eschatology,[4] Martin Kahler rang the alarm-bell in 1892. In his book, *The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ,* published that year, he made a sharp distinction between the "historical" and the "historic", and poured contempt on the former term.

"As far as Kahler is concerned," comments James P. Mackey, "it is the business of the biblical documents to present us with a portrait of the historic Christ. The adjective 'historic', as distinct from its near-verbal neighbour 'historical', indicates not any particular data about the actual man in his time, but rather the impact he has had on the history of the world...[5] Kahler insists that the documents are faith documents, portraying and soliciting faith, that they were never meant to yield historical data about an individual, and that they can never do so in any worthwhile quantity. The tables are turned, but apparently only with the effect of defiantly establishing a thesis which was beginning to be dimly perceived, the thesis that history and faith can find no common ground in research in the origins of Christianity..."[6]

The next brave theologian to enter the lists and hurl similar "defiance" at history as well human reason, was Albert Schweitzer whose celebrated book, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus,* was published first in German in 1906 and then in English in 1910. It has been reprinted many times and in several languages. It is by now regarded as a classic on the subject.

[4] "Since the word eschatological is probably the most abused word in contemporary theology, a kind of pseudo-verbal escape mechanism from all kinds of conceptual difficulty, it is not easy to say what it means. To say that it means that Jesus' resurrection was 'an event which occurs precisely at the end of history', presumably in some anticipatory fashion, is probably the very plainest of plain nonsense" (James P. Mackey, op. cit., p.287, Note 8)

[5] James P. Mackey, op. cit., p. 43.

[6] Ibid., p.44.

Schweitzer tried to be more sophisticated as compared to Kahler who was shooting straight from the shoulder. In other words, the frank honesty of the latter was replaced by the veiled dishonesty of the former. I have to quote Schweitzer at some length in order to illustrate the mind that was now struggling to surface in what became known as "radical" theology.

The volume of language consumed by Schweitzer in as many as 410 pages and the crafted style, creates the illusion of earnest scholarship. One is likely to think that his conclusions are drawn at the end of a meticulous attempt to understand the intricacies of the problem. He, however, assumes at the very beginning of his book, the proposition he is out to prove. "Moreover," he says to start with, "we are here dealing with the most vital thing in the world's history. There came a Man to rule over the world... That He continues, notwithstanding, to reign as the alone Great and alone True in a world of which He denied continuance, is the prime example of that anti-thesis between spiritual and natural truth which underlies all life and all events, and in Him emerges into the field of history."[7] What he wants us to believe at the very outset is that history was groping in the dark before a non-descript Jew from Galilee got himself hanged. The conclusions that follow after he has gone over all important books on the subject published between 1778 and 1901 AD, are being given in his own words.

"The historical foundation of Christianity as built up by rationalistic, by liberal, and by modern theology no longer exists; but that does not mean that Christianity has lost its historical foundation. The work which historical theology thought itself bound to carry out, and which fell to pieces just as it was nearing completion, was only the brick facing of the real immovable historical foundation which is independent of any historical comfirmation *(sic)* or justification.[8]

"It was no small matter, therefore, that in the course of the critical study of the Life of Jesus, after a resistance lasting for two generations, during which first one expedient was tried and

[7] Albert Scheweitzer, op. cit., p.2.

[8] Ibid., p. 397.

then another, theology was forced by genuine history to begin to doubt the artificial history with which it had thought to give new life to our Christianity, and to yield to the facts which, as Wrede strikingly said, are sometimes the most radical critics of all. History will force it to find a way to transcend history, and to fight for the lordship and rule of Jesus over this world with weapons tempered in a different forge.

"We are experiencing what Paul experienced. In the very moment when we were coming nearer to the historical Jesus than men had ever come before, and we were already stretching out our hands to draw Him into our own time, we have been obliged to give up the attempt and acknowledge our failure in the paradoxical saying: 'If we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we Him no more.' And further we must be prepared to find that the historical knowledge of the personality and life of Jesus will not be a help, but perhaps even an offence to religion.

"But the truth is, it is not Jesus as historically known, but Jesus as spiritually arisen within men, who is significant for our time and can help it. Not the historical Jesus but the spirit which goes forth from Him and in the spirits of men strives for new influence and rule, is that which overcomes the world. "It is not given to history to disengage that which is abiding and eternal in the being of Jesus from the historical forms in which it worked itself out, and to introduce it into our world as a living influence. It has toiled in vain at this undertaking... The abiding and eternal in Jesus is absolutely independent of historical knowledge and can only be understood by contact with His spirit which is still at work in the world. In proportion as we have the spirit of Jesus we have the true knowledge of Jesus.[9] "For that reason it is a good thing that the true historical Jesus should overthrow the modern Jesus, should rise up against the modem spirit and send upon earth, not peace, but a sword. He was not teacher, not a casuist; He was an imperious ruler. It was because He was so in His inmost being that He could think of Himself as the Son of Man. That was only the temporally

[9] Ibid., p.399.

conditioned expression of the fact that He was an authoritative ruler. The names in which men expressed their recognition of Him as such, Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God, have become for us historical parables. We can find no designation which expresses what He is for us.

"He comes to us as one unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lake side He came to those who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: 'Follow thou me!' and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is."[10]

Comment on this desperate display of poetry, casuistry, verbiage and worse is superfluous. Nobody can beat the Christian theologians, not even Hegel, when it comes to camouflaging with pompous rhetoric and linguist tricks the complete collapse of their logic. In the case of Albert Schweitzer writing in 1906, there was additional reason for feeling confident about the ultimate triumph of Jesus Christ and the capacity of Christian theology to overcome the "temporary" crisis. Christian missions which had flocked to every corner of "heathendom" in the wake of Western armadas and big battalions, had just completed what K. Latourette names as *The Great Century* in the expansion of the faith. Christianity had never had it so good, after the conquest and devastation of the Americas by the soldiers of Christ. In the same year (1910) that Schweitzer's magnum opus was published in England, the First International Missionary Council was getting ready to announce at Edinburgh "the evangelization of the world in one generation".[11] Coffers of the Christian missions were overflowing with vast wealth, collected from Western governments and private patrons, who in turn had robbed it from the victims of evangelization. It would have been a miracle if smug Christian-Western chauvinists like Albert Schweitzer had not mistaken the mailed fist of Western gangsterism for the

10 Ibid., p.401.

11 Paul Johnson, op. cit., p. 457.

manifest spirit of Christ. He was not alone in this self-satisfied orgy of Jesus-mongering. The Western world at that time was brimful of such black-coated braggarts.

So Christian theology managed to "transcend" history, and abandoned the quest for the historical Jesus. The next problem it faced was more momentous — what to do with its stock-in-trade so far, namely, the Jesus of the gospels? Rationalists and humanists in the West had continued to point out that the Jesus of the gospels was quite an obnoxious character. Leading psychologists in the West had seen in this Jesus many unmistakable symptoms of mental sickness; in fact, some of them had nailed him as stark mad. For historians of Christianity, the Jesus of the gospels was a figure which stood soaked in the blood of countless innocents in all continents. For serious social scientists, the spirit of this Jesus had materialized in totalitarian ideologies like Communism and Nazism. The "faith documents" did not seem to be of much help for salvaging the Christ of faith.

Jesus of the Gospels

The rationalists and the humanist had smiled at the wild claims advanced for himself by Jesus in the gospels, particularly in the gospel of John. But they had frowned at his sayings which divided the human family into two warring camps of believers and infidels. They had dismissed his miracles as stories meant for children or grown-up morons, but were pained by his lack of sense as well as sensitivity in drowning a herd of pigs and cursing the fig tree for not bearing fruit out of season. They had found his parables quite commonplace except those relating to the burning of weeds, the reallocation of vineyards, and the compelling of people to come in, which they thought revealed a vicious mind. For them, the ethics he preached was either sanctimonious humbug (Sermon on the Mount) which worked to the advantage of the bully and the robber and the spendthrift, or quite brutal and inhuman (pluck out your eyes, cut off your limbs). In any case, he himself had never practised what he had preached. He was intolerant, short-tempered, and foul-mouthed, and went about cursing everyone who did not applaud his tall

talk. His intemperate denunciation of the Jews had led to shrieking anti-Semitism down the ages. He was anti-work and did not want his followers to labour in the present or lay store for the future. He was also an anti-social character who asked his disciples to desert their parents, who disowned his own mother and brothers in public, and who proclaimed that he had come to set the son against his father and brother against brother. His behaviour in the temple at Jerusalem where he went violent, upturned the tables of the money-changers, and whipped people right and left, was cruel, reprehensible and uncalled for. The ugliest note he introduced in the belief system of his disciples was a cataclysmic end of the world, and eternal hell-fire for those who did not accept him as what his inflated ego had induced him to see in himself. Finally, his advocacy of missions for bringing the whole world into his fold, was a mandate for gangsterism and predatory imperialism.

The psychologists were not slow to note that the Jesus of the gospels was totally lacking in a sense of humour; he never smiled, not to speak of having a hearty laugh. He was suffering from megalomania when he indulged in all that tall talk about himself, and from melancholia when he feared persecution and death. The two moods are known to alternate again and again in serious cases of mental disorder. He struck a heroic pose before the Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilate, but broke down completely on the eve of his arrest as well as on the cross. In the psychological language of ancient Jews, he had been possessed by unclean spirits who had recognised him as soon as they saw him. We need not go into the details of the analysis to which the sayings and doings of the Jesus of the gospels have been subjected by a number of competent psychologists. It should suffice to say that most of the modern psychologists have found this Jesus an object of pity on account of his mental sickness, but an object of concern because he poses a serious threat to human brotherhood and social peace in the event of his teachings being followed by some fraternity or establishment. They cite the horrors of Christian history in order to clinch the argument.

Historians of Christianity saw the Jesus of the gospels inspir-

ing theocratic states which extinguished all human freedoms, church hierarchies which killed and burnt at the stake millions of men and women after denouncing them as heretics and witches, and military missions which massacred whole populations and wiped out whole civilizations in course of the holy wars waged against the heathens in Europe, America, Asia, Africa and the Oceania. They also noticed how he had been aped by Muhammad not only in advancing the same sort of wild claims but also in perpetrating atrocities which those claims entailed inevitably. The quantum of crimes committed by Muhammad's Islam was only slightly smaller than that of the crimes committed by the Christianity of Jesus Christ. Unlike the armies of Christianity, the armies of Islam had failed to ride roughshod over the whole globe. It was only in Iran and India that Islam could emulate the Christian record. So the Jesus of the gospels could rightly be credited with the greatest crimes over the longest span of time in human history. The nightmare was not yet over if one looked at Islamic lands in the enlightened twentieth century. Historians could not but conclude that the world would have been a happier and healthier place if there had been no Jesus Christ, real or invented.

Social scientists in the wake of the First World War saw close similarities in the Jesus of the gospels on the one hand and Lenin and Stalin on the other. Bertrand Russell characterised Communism as a Christian heresy. There were any number of indications in the gospels that Jesus would have done the same as Lenin and Stalin had done if he had the same power. Communism was the Christian Church and theocracy reincarnated — the dogmas, the popes, the priests, the inquisition, the suppression of freedom, the witch-hunting, the brain-washing, the hymns of hate, the wars of liberation, the large-scale killings, and the rest. Only the verbiage used for mounting the macabre campaign was different.

The parallel between Jesus and Hitler was seen as still more striking. The Nazi creed as laid down by Hitler, did not sound much different from the Christian creed as preached by Jesus in the gospels. "I believe," said the Nazi creed, "in the revelation of the divine, creative power and the pure blood shed in war and peace by the sons of the German national community, buried in the soil thereby sane-

tified, risen and living in all for whom it is immolated. I believe in an eternal life on earth of this blood that was poured out and rose again in all who have recognized the meaning of the sacrifice and are ready to submit to them... Thus I believe in an eternal God, an eternal Germany, and an eternal life."[12] Nazism had substituted the German race for God, and the German blood for the blood of Jesus. But the spirit was the same, and the same horrors followed as had been witnessed for centuries after the advent of Christianity.

The Nazi copying of Christianity did not stop at the theological level. It percolated to the rituals as well. "There were special Nazi feasts, especially 9 November, commemorating the ***putsch*** of 1923, the Nazi passion, and crucifixion feast, of which Hitler said: 'The blood which they poured out is become the altar of baptism for our Reich.' The actual ceremony was conducted like a passion play. And there were Nazi sacraments. A special wedding service was designed for the SS. It included runic figures, a sun-disc of flowers, a fire-bowl, and it opened with the chorus from ***Lohengrin,*** after which the pair received bread and salt. At SS baptismal ceremonies, the room was decorated with a centre altar containing a photograph of Hitler, and a copy of *Mein Kampf;* and on the walls were candles, Nazi flags, the Tree of Life and branches of younger trees. There was music from Grieg's *Peter Gynt* ('Morning'), readings from the *Mein Kampf,* promises by the sponsors and other elements of the Christian ceremony; but the celebrant was as SS officer and the service concluded with the hymn of loyalty to the SS. The Nazis even had their own grace before meals for their orphanages, and Nazi versions of famous hymns. Thus:

> Silent night, holy night,
> All is calm, all is bright,
> Only the Chancellor steadfast in fight,
> Watches over Germany by day and night,
> Always caring for us.

There was also a Nazi burial service."[13]

[12] Paul Johnson, op. cit, p. 486.

[13] Paul Johnson, op. cit., p. 486-87.

The Gospels are the First Nazi Manifesto

Apart from the various other features in which Adolf Hitler reincarnated Jesus Christ, the Holocaust in which millions of Jews were slaughtered in various ways was directly inspired by the Jesus of the gospels. The Jews had been denounced by him as snakes, as a brood of vipers, as sons of the Devil, as killers of prophets, as an adulterous nation, and as permanent enemies of his church simply because they refused to acclaim him as the Messiah. The Christian theology that followed, stamped them with a permanent guilt — they were killers of Christ. The Jews had been reduced to non-citizens, and subjugated to repeated pogroms all over Christianised Europe and throughout the centuries. Muhammad had also done the same after he failed to persuade the Jews to accept his claim of prophethood. He had massacred the Jews of Medina and his Muslims had followed the precedent wherever Islam prevailed. No one, however, had worked out the message of the gospels systematically, and blueprinted the final solution before Hitler arrived on the scene. Human emotions other than religious fanaticism had intervened frequently in favour of the Jews. In short, no one before Hitler had grasped completely the verdict passed on the Jews by the Jesus of the gospels. Small wonder that serious thinkers in the West came to look at the gospels as the First Nazi Manifesto.

Christian historians are now making herculean efforts to salvage the Jesus of the gospels from the history he has created. They are blaming on "non-Christian elements and forces" all brutalities committed by Christian churches and missions in Europe and elsewhere, and presenting Jesus as an embodiment of humility, charity, compassion, and peace. They are saying that the spread of Western imperialism and Christianity at the same time, was a mere coincidence, and that the purposes of the two should be perceived separately. But there are few serious historians who subscribe to this cult of "the disentangled Christ". For most of them, the inspiration for crimes committed by Western imperialism in league with Christian missions, came from the Jesus of the gospels. James Morris put it bluntly when he said that "every aspect of the Empire was an aspect of Christ".

All in all, therefore, by the middle of the twentieth century the Jesus of the gospels had become a thoroughly discredited figure in the modern West, and could hardly he presented as the Christ of Faith. Christian theology had to overcome yet another crisis, and save whatever could he saved of its tattered mantle. It was at this point that Rudolf Bultmann of the University of Marburg in Germany came forward with his "defiant manifesto on faith's independence of the historians' labours".[14] As he is supposed to be the greatest theologian of the twentieth century, I shall present him at some length.

Christ of Kerygma

To start with, Bultmann made short work of the gospels and proclaimed, as noted earlier, that the gospels did not preserve the actual doings and teachings of Jesus and that nothing could now be known of the Jesus of history. He dismissed the stories based on Old Testament prophecies as concoctions by the evangelists. He dismissed all miracles attributed to Jesus in the Gospels. He dismissed such of Jesus' sayings as could be traced to Jewish thinking of Jesus' time. "By a series of deductions he concluded that much of what appears in the gospels was not what Jesus had actually said and done, but what Christians at least two generations removed had invented about him, or had inferred from what early preachers had told them. Not surprisingly, Bultmann's approach left intact little that might have derived from the original Jesus — not much more than the parables, Jesus' baptism, his Galilean and Judaean ministry and his crucifixion. Recognizing this himself, he condemned as useless further attempts to try to reconstruct the Jesus of history."[15] Next, he invented a Jesus whom he named as the Christ of Kerygma.

Enquiry into what the real Jesus really believed or experienced inside himself, was ruled out. "Bultmann warned, in peremptory fashion: 'the kerygma does not permit any enquiry into

[14] James P. Mackey, op. cit., p. 11.

[15] Ian Wilson, op. cit., pp. 36-37 with reference to Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition,* Gottingen, 1923.

the personal faith of the preacher' (that is, Jesus)... He is both heir and defiant defender of a long century of growing scepticism about the ability of the New Testament texts to tell us anything at all certain about the historical Jesus. He is an equally staunch opponent of what in the Reformation tradition was known as psychologism, that is, the attempt to describe the inner mental states of Jesus... In his view, then, to try to find out if Jesus was himself a man of faith was a task both idle and possibly pernicious. The true kerygma, the true preaching of Jesus as Lord, simply forbade it. Faith in Jesus...rules out any talk about the faith of Jesus."[16]

Jesus was simply to be presented as Lord without bothering about the basis and quality of that lordship. "Bultmann does not hold the same view of the divinity of Jesus as did Aquinas. Yet he is equally convinced that in the preaching of Jesus as Lord, if we are only open to it, God himself encounters us and enables us to make the faith-decision... Speculation about the personal faith of the historical Jesus is at best unhelpful to such an encounter with God in the preaching of Jesus as Lord. At best it will mislead us into thinking that Christian faith is merely a matter of imitating some mental states of Jesus presented to us now by some reliable historian."[17]

Bultmann's starting point was Kahler's thesis that the Gospels were "faith documents", and that they should not be subjected to historical scrutiny. But he carried the thesis much farther. "By the time Bultmann has finished developing Kahler's thesis, it is clear, the embargo on the quest of the historical Jesus is no longer based primarily upon the alleged inability of the historical method working on the sources at our disposal to paint a substantial picture of the historical Jesus. The point is made with mainly theological intent by Bultmann, as in his oft-quoted sentence: 'Faith, being a personal decision, cannot be dependent upon a historian's labours'... Clearly enough, the suggestion...is

[16] James P. Mackey, op. cit., p. 164 with reference to Bultmann, *Jesus and the World* (1926) and 'Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus', in Carl E. Brandon et al (ed.), *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ,* Nashville, NH (USA), 1964.

[17] Ibid. p. 165.

that Christian faith should not require the support of critical history."[18]

He places a ban not only on history but also on philosophy. "The object of our faith, according to Bultmann, is the Christ of the kerygma (the Christ of Christian preaching or proclamation) and not the person of the historical Jesus, and the 'Christ of the kerygma is not a historical figure which could enjoy continuity with the historical Jesus'. The Christ of Christian preaching is the risen Lord, not a historical Jesus. Bultmann would not want us to think that the faith by which our lives are literally saved is 'mere knowledge' or intellectual acceptance of a 'theoretical world view' that refers all existence back to a creator God. Rather, there is 'an individual man like us in whose action God acts, in whose destiny God is at work, in whose word God speaks'. And to have faith in this one is to let God rule our lives and not let them be ruled by any human power or plan or any worldly possession. 'What we are to learn from the cross of Christ is to go as far as to believe precisely this; and it is for this reason that Christ is our Lord, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.'"[19]

What is this kerygma or Christian proclamation? It is the cross rather than the gospels, says Bultmann. "But, of course, 'in the kerygma the mythical form of the Son of God has appeared in place of the historical person of Jesus'...The man in whose action God acts, in whose destiny God is at work, in whose word God speaks, is the Son of God, not the historical Jesus. 'The obedience and self-emptying of Christ of which he (i.e. Paul) speaks (Phil. 2.6-9; Rom.15.3; II Cor. 8.9) are attitudes of the pre-existent and not of the historical Jesus,' 'and the cross is not regarded from a biographical standpoint but as saving event..."'[20]

Who is to proclaim the kerygma or the proclamation? Bultmann's answer is quite clear. "It is the proclamation of the

[18] Ibid., p. 250, with reference to Bultmann, *The Theology of the New Testament,* sixth edition, Tubingen, 1968.

[19] Ibid., p. 251, with reference to Bultmann, *Existence and Faith* (1968) and 'The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus' (1968).

[20] Ibid., pp. 251-52, with reference to Bultmann, 'The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus' (1968).

Christian community, not the repetition of the alleged preaching of Jesus or of the implications of his ministry, that can enable us, by God's grace, to confess Jesus as our present Lord, the crucified and the risen saviour, in the confession of whose name we contact that faith in God as the creator and giver of all life and existence by which we must then live. *Only the Christian preaching demands our faith in the fact that this once crucified man is Lord of the world,* and thus faces us with the awful paradox that the least likely of events is God's saving act in the world..."[21]

We are back to Tertullian: "It is certain because it is impossible." Whatever be the facts, the conclusions of Christian theologians remain the same. Christianity, they say, must retain its right to aggress against others, even if all evidences goes to show that its founder is a fiction, that the fiction is insufferably filthy, and that all its tom-tom in defence of that fiction is pure hogwash. Christian theologians will go on playing the game so long as the victims of Christian aggression do not tell them that their "risen Lord" and the rest is rubbish, pure and simple, and that the sooner they stop selling this junk, the better for their own morals and mental health. I am reminded of an observation which Mahatma Gandhi had made on the character of Christian theology. Talking to some Christian missionaries on 12 March 1940, he had said, "Among agents of many untruths that are propounded in the world one of the foremost is theology. I do not say that there is no demand for it. There is demand in the world for many a questionable thing."[22]

By the time he died in 1976, Bultmann had become far more famous than Schweitzer. The reason is very simple. Compared to the halting, half-yes-half-no, and mournful manner of Schweitzer, Bultmann was far more brazen-faced in his casuistry. It can be laid down as a rule that the more crooked and crafty a theologian, the higher the prestige he acquires in the eyes of those Christians who want to maintain that their abominable superstition is sublime truth, and that their aggression

21 Ibid., p.254. Emphasis added.

22 *Collected Works,* Volume 71, p. 338.

against other people has a divine sanction. It is the misfortune of the victims of Christian aggression that they have not only to counter the aggression in various forms but also to wade through the stinking cesspit that is Christian theology. Those who do not know the wiles of Christian theology are most likely to walk into the missionary trap. Missionary language is no guide to missionary intentions.

Commenting on Bultmann's proposition that kerygma means proclaiming the risen Lord, J. Jeremias, Professor of theology at the University of Gottingen, observed that this amounted to saying that Christianity began "after Easter" (crucifixion), and that this was "comparable to the suggestion that Islam began only after the death of Muhammad".[23] Rev. D.E. Nineham, Warden of Keble College, University of Oxford, repudiated Bultmann's view that "if Jesus of faith is religiously satisfying, his historicity need not be insisted on", and replied that "such a standpoint reduces the gospel to a series of false statements about the life of a man who either never lived or was in fact *toto caelo* different from the statements about him'."[24] The Jewish scholar, Dr. Geza Vermes, made fun of the Bultmann school by commenting that ihey have "their feet off the ground of history and their heads in the clouds of faith".[25]

James P. Mackey suspects that "people who try to force upon me a too dichotomous choice between Christian faith and critical history are hiding from me, and perhaps from themselves, a very definite, and a very questionable presumption about the Christian faith", and that "when the question concerns the sources of this faith in our lives, the manner in which we can contract this faith, then Bultmann's presumptions begin to show, and then they are questionable".[26] He frowns upon the interdict which Bultmann has laid on all historical enquiry into the origins of Christianity. "Where does the Christian proclamation come from and where did it get this specific content, if not from the actual, historical life and death of Jesus of Nazareth?" he asks.

[23] G.A. Wells, op. cit., p.2.

[24] Ibid., p. 9.

[25] Cited by Ian Wison, op. cit., p. 37.

[26] James P. Mackey, op. cit., p. 250-51.

"Clearly," he continues, "Bultmann does not want such questions asked or answered. All attempts to raise and resolve such questions represent to him an illicit procedure, an attempt to 'legitimate' our preaching and our responding faith, an attempt to give ourselves 'a good conscience' about it. We are faced purely and simply with the proclamation which Bultmann has outlined... It makes no difference from what human words or deeds it came to us *(oddly enough the only one from whom we can be quite sure this proclamation did not come is the historical Jesus)."*[11] In simple language, Bultmann asks us to accept a self-evident falsehood as self-evident truth.

Christianity is a Big Lie

Michael Arnheim is more forthright in presenting the plight to which Christianity has been reduced. I will quote him at some length. He writes: "By the early twentieth century the so-called 'quest for the historical Jesus' was bogged down in negativism. The Gospels, according to an influential schools of Protestant theologians, were to be taken as theological rather than as historical documents, and they could yield no authentic information about the life and deeds, or even the sayings and teachings, of Jesus. "Such a conclusion might have been expected to have a cataclysmic effect upon Christianity. For, after all, there could surely be no Christianity without Christ, and there could be no Christ without Jesus? But if Jesus were so shadowy a figure as to belong more to the realm of myth and legend than to that of history and fact, the whole edifice of Christianity must surely crumble?

"Not so, said the radical theologians. The truth of Christianity was independent of historical proof, and historical evidence was therefore quite irrelevant to the validity of Christianity. "How then *is* one to decide on the truth or falsehood of Christianity? For Rudolf Bultmann, one of the most influential Christian theologians of the twentieth century, the key element in the religion was what he called an 'existential encounter with

[27] Ibid., p. 255. Emphasis added.

Christ', which did not depend upon any intellectual critical process, but rather on a leap into the dark — or, to put it more crudely, upon an acceptance of faith on trust.

"Knox and Nineham, two leading British theologians, similarly reject the possibility of basing Christian faith upon historical evidence but resort instead to the Church as the basis of faith, thus becoming caught in a circular argument. As Donald Guthrie remarks: '...Neither Nineham nor Knox has recognised the inconsistency of appealing to the testimony of the Church when they have already denied the historical accounts, which they regard as the products of the Church.'

"With this we are back to square one: by what criterion may the truth or falsehood of Christianity be judged? To base one's acceptance of a religion upon blind faith or unsupported trust gives one no right to claim the superiority of that religion over any other religion, nor does it entitle one to assert the truth of that religion.

"And yet there is no religion in the world which is more insistent than Christianity upon its claim to truth or more confident of its superiority to all the other faiths."[28] The only other criterion on which Christianity can and does base its claim to superiority is the fact that it has been a great success story, having imposed itself over large populations in every part of the globe. I shall quote Michael Arnheim on this point as well. He says:

"A creed religion like Christianity... is constantly competing against all other religions — and, what is more, doing so on their own home grounds. Its success is measured in terms of the number of converts it makes.

"There can be no doubt of the success of Christianity by this criterion, but it is strange to find the same criterion used not as a measure of success but also a proof of Christianity's truth. "The basis for this may be the assumption that 'you can't fool all the people all the time' and therefore that the wider the acceptance that an idea or belief enjoys the truer it must be! But perhaps Adolf Hitler's remark about the effectiveness of the 'big

[28] Michael Arnheim, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

lie', a subject on which he must be acknowledged an expert, is nearer the mark.

"Yet the equation between popularity and truth persists in the common mind... If Christianity were not true, runs the common line of argument, then why should it have prospered as it so obviously has?

"The argument of course rests four-square upon the assumption that the success of a religion in attracting adherents and amassing wealth is a mark of divine favour and an endorsement of its truth.

"But Christianity took a long time to become successful, and the argument of 'truth from success' would therefore simply not have served the interests of the early church fathers. Despite the occasional bouts of persecution by means of which the Roman imperial government (inadvertently) boosted the number of converts to Christianity, after three hundred years the number of Christians in the Roman Empire, according to modern estimates, amounted to no more than 10 per cent of the total population. It was only in the fourth century after the conversion of Emperor Constantine that Christianity became a major religion in numerical terms. It is now quite clear that it was not the success of Christianity which attracted Constantine to it but Constantine's conversion which led to the religion's success. The emperor's conversion naturally gave Christianity an aura of respectability which it had previously lacked, but, perhaps even more important, the statute book was soon bristling with laws discriminating again non-Christians."[29]

Arnheim does not deal with the subsequent stages of Christianity's success story. He assumes that the readers for whom he is writing are conversant with the criminal history of Christianity in Europe and all other countries. That history has been documented by Western scholars, and is available to all those who care to know what Christianity has meant to peoples whom it chose to evangelize.

[29] Ibid., pp. 198-99. It may be pointed out that people in the Asian, African, and European provinces of the Roman Empire were attracted to Christianity, not because it impressed them as a superior religion, but because it represented a revolt against Roman imperialism.

Finally, Arnheim comes to theologians like Bultrann who stick to the superior claims of Christianity in spite of it having been found out as a fraud based on a total falsehood. He concludes:

"These are people who cannot accept the Gospel claims as literally true but also cannot bring themselves to admit that a rejection of those claims is a rejection of Christianity. They want to regard themselves as Christians without accepting the basis of the Christian faith. Hence the resort to high-flown jargon and the many attempts to explain the Gospel accounts away as mythical or figurative representations of a transcendent and not easily intelligible set of truths.

" 'Truth in matter of religion,' said Oscar Wilde, 'is simply the opinion that has survived.' It is in this sense, and in this sense alone, that Christianity can be said to be true. The only problem is that this definition of truth brings it dangerously close to what can only be called — the big lie."[30]

The merchants of the Big Lie that is Christianity were able to sell their goods over a large part of the globe and for a long time, not because they possessed any superior skill, but simply because they concentrated on assembling big arsenals, floating big fleets, and marshalling big battalions for terrorising the sceptical or the unwilling buyers. "Go out into the highways and among the hedges, and compel people to come in" (Lk. 14.24) was, for a long time, the only method they knew of increasing the number of their clients. They would not have renounced this method willingly or voluntarily, had they not been found out for what they were, and exposed in their own homelands — Europe and North America.

[30] Ibid., p. 201.

Chapter 4
Christianity Crumbles in the West

In spite of Bultmann and the rest resorting to endless blah blah, the twentieth century West has refused to buy the Christ of Faith. What we find flourishing over there, as we have seen, is the Jesus of Fiction. “Anyone who cares to look,” writes Koenraad Elst, “can see that Christianity [in the West] is in a steep decline. This is especially the case in Europe, where church attendance levels in many countries have fallen below 10% or even 5%. In most Christian countries, the trend is the same, even if less dramatic. Even more ominous for the survival of Christianity is the decline in the priestly vocation. Many parishes that used to have two or three parish priests now have none. So that Sunday Service has to be conducted by a visiting priest, who has an ever fuller agenda as his colleagues keep on dying, retiring or abandoning priesthood without being replaced. The average age of Catholic priests in the world is now 55. In the Netherlands it is even 62, and increasing. This is only partly due to the strenuous obligation of celibacy, for in Protestant Churches where priests do get married, and in those countries where Catholic priests ignore the celibacy rules, the decline in priestly vocation is also in evidence. The fact is that modern people just aren’t very interested anymore is practising Christianity.”[1]

“In an ironical reversal of roles,” reports Arthur J. Pais, “priests from India are going out to the West, not so much to spread the faith as priests from the West journeyed to the East to do, but to keep the Church’s institutions going.” He finds “5,000 foreign priests who come on a five-year contract negotiated between bishops in America and their respective countries”. Among them 500 are from India. “Another 250 [Indian] priests are either working for their master’s degree or a Ph.D. and work part-time in churches, hospitals, schools, prisons and rehabilitation centres, offering religious instructions and counselling. Several of them work as chaplains in the American armed forces.”

---

[1] Koenraad Elst, *op cit.,* p. 1

Indian nuns too are now increasingly needed in America. "Most of the Indian nuns here belong to Mother Teresa's convents, and they work in the slums in the Bronx and in Chicago... They are venturing into areas most Americans would rather ignore." The author concludes, "Catholicism is still a potent force in developing countries like India while in the more consumerist West its missionary fervour has considerably dimmed. Though Indian priests and nuns may be co-opted to work in the poorer parishes of America, they seem to be doing their bit to keep the religion alive."[2] I came across quite a few of these Indian priests and nuns during my travels in Europe and America in 1979 and 1989.

The situation in AD *(anno Domini,* year of the Lord) 1980 was summed up by the *World Christian Encyclopaedia* after a statistical survey. "Christianity," it says, "has experienced *massive losses* in the Western and Communist world over the last 60 years. In Europe and North America, defections from Christianity — converts to other religions or irreligion — are now running at 1,820,500 former Christians a year. *This loss is much higher* if we consider only church numbers: 2,224,800 a year (6,000 a day). *It is even higher* if we are speaking only of church attenders: every year some 2,765,100 church attenders in Europe and North America cease to be practising Christians within the 12-month period, an average loss of 7,600 every *day...At the global level these losses from Christianity... outweigh the gains in the Third World."*[3] A large number of churches all over Europe stand abandoned or uncared for. Many churches have been made into buildings for non-religious use. Many others have been sold to non-Christians who have converted them into their own places of worship.

Why has it happened? "The point simply is," observes Koenraad Elst, "that we, European Christians of many generations, have outgrown Christianity. Most people who left the church have found that they are not missing anything, and that

[2] *The Sunday Observer,* New Delhi, January 16-22, 1994, p 12

[3] *World Christian Encyclopaedia A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the World, AD 1900-2000,* edited by David B Barret, OUP, 1982, p 7. Emphasis added

beliefs which provided a framework for interpreting and shaping life, were but a bizarre and unnecessary construction after all. We know that Jesus was not God's Only-begotten Son, that he did not save humanity from eternal sin, and that our happiness in this world or the next does not depend on believing these or any other dogmas."[4] In fact, it is wrong to talk any more of a "Christian West", as most of us continue to do.

The fact that Christian missions are still in business in the Hindu-Buddhist world, should not lead to the inference that the controllers of the missions in the West care for saving of heathen souls. What it simply means is that powerful political interests in the West as also the Western intelligence networks find the missions handy for destabilizing the governments and disintegrating the social fabrics in the Hindu-Buddhist world. Yesterday it was the formidable military might of the West which was maintaining the crusaders for Christ. Today it is the fabulous wealth of the West which keeps the merchants of Jesus in business. The merchants have not only been able to retain the organisational weapons which they had forged in the heyday of Western imperialism, they have also kept on multiplying the weapons with the help of mammoth finance and media power which the West has placed at their disposal. Let no one make the mistake of seeing religious faith in the sprawling missions and seminaries and hierarchies in the East. Thorn trees have never been known to blossom with flowers.

The Scene in India

It is, therefore, sadly surprising that the Jesus of the gospels should continue to retain his hallow in the land of the Veda-Vedanga, the Itihasa-Purana, the Dharmasastras, the Saddarsanas, the Tripitaka, the Jainagama, and the bhakti literature. Christianity is accepted as a religion not only by the westernised Hindu elite but also by Hindu saints, scholars, and political platforms. Swami Dayananda had seen through the fraud that is Jesus as soon as he read the gospels. But his example was not followed by Hindu leaders who came later. Chris-

[4] Koenraad Elst, op. cit., pp. vii-viii.

tian missions have been criticised, but Jesus has been praised to the skies, particularly by Mahatma Gandhi. This strategy to measure the Christian missions with their own yardstick, has not worked. In fact, it has boomeranged as is evident from the freedom which Christian missions have increasingly acquired not only to aggress against but also to throw Hindu society on the defensive. They are waging a war on Hinduism with no holds barred.

"When staying in India," says Koenraad Elst, "I find it sad and sometimes comical to see how these outdated beliefs are being foisted upon backward sections of the Indian population by fanatical missionaries. In their aggressive campaign to sell their product, the missionaries are helped a lot by sentimental expressions of admiration for Christianity on the part of leading Hindus. Many Hindus project their own religious categories on the few Jesus episodes they have heard, and they base their whole attitude to Christianity on what I know to be a selective, incoherent and unhistorical version of the available information on Jesus's life and teaching..."[5]

Most Hindus know the story of Raja Nala who made it easy for Kaliyuga to enter into him and make him lose his kingdom by showing weakness for gambling. Weakness for Jesus is the same sort of vice. The moment a Hindu shows this weakness, he invites the Christian missionary apparatus and its controllers in the West — intelligence networks and foreign policy departments — to increase their stranglehold and subvert his country and culture. He also encourages mischievous Christian theologians to write the following type of books:

1. *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* by Raimundo Panikkar, London, 1964.
2. *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* by M.M. Thomas, Madras, 1976.
3. *India's Search for the Unknown Christ* by K.V. Paul Pillai, New Delhi, 1978.
4. *The Lost Years of Christ* by Elizabeth Clare Prophet, Livingston, MT (USA), 1984.

---

[5] Ibid., p. viii.

5. *Christ as Common Ground: A Study of Christianity and Hinduism* by Kathleen Healy with a Foreword by Bede Griffiths, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania (USA), 1990.

Of these, the first three are fraudulent, the fourth is based on a blatant forgery, and the fifth is a mass of meaningless verbiage. For those who seek sincerely, there is nothing unknown in Hinduism; it has never tried to hide what it stands for. In any case, it has never harboured, to use the language of the gospels, an unclean spirit like Jesus. No stalwart of the Indian Renaissance ever recognized Jesus as the Christ. Nor did Jesus, if he existed at all, ever come to India to denounce the Brahmanas, the Kshatriyas, and the caste system as is alleged in the forgery. And Healy is no more than a professional hack trying to encash the current Christian fashion for dialogue with Hinduism.

I can cite many more books and pamphlets written in the same vein and for the same purpose, namely, to prove that Hinduism remains unfulfilled without accepting Jesus Christ as its crown. The Jesus industry in India will continue to flood the market with similar spurious products till Hindus make it clear that there is nothing common between Sanatana Dharma and the sinister cult of the Only Saviour, that Hindus have nothing to learn from Christianity but a lot to teach, and that the sooner the Christians missions close their shop in this country the better for them and their masters abroad.

Koenraad Elst had tendered a very sound advice to us Hindus; "What Hindus who have been trapped in a sentimental glorification of Jesus and other prophets will have to learn, is that the essence of Hindu Dharma is not 'tolerance' or 'equal respect for all religious' but *satya*, truth. The problem with Christianity and Islam is superficially their intolerance and fanaticism. But this intolerance is a consequence of these religions' untruthfulness. If your belief system is based on delusions, you have to pre-empt rational enquiry into it and shield it from contact with more sustainable thought systems. The fundamental problem with monotheistic religions is not that they are intolerant but that they are untrue *(Asatya or Anrita)*."[6]

[6] Ibid., p. 134.

Jesus is Junk

It is high time for Hindus to learn that Jesus Christ symbolises no spiritual power, or moral uprightness. He is no more than an artifice for legitimizing wanton imperialist aggression. The aggressors have found him to be highly profitable so far. By the same token, Hindus should know that Jesus means nothing but mischief for their country and culture. The West where he flourished for long, has discarded him as junk. There is no reason why Hindus should buy him. He is the type of junk that cannot be re-cycled. He can only poison the environment.

Appendix 1
Of Pagan Gods and Heresies

The following article by S.K. Balasubraamaniam which appeared in *The Observer of Business and Politics,* New Delhi, on 16 April 1994 shows in brief how revealed religions fatten on other faiths which they destroy eventually.

Revealed religions deal with contrary theological beliefs either by expelling them as heresies or assimilating them into their own doctrines.

Revelations, to be valid, have to be original. Otherwise every growing child can claim its new experiences as divinely ordained inspiration. In revealed religions, like Christianity and Islam, there is no scope for dissent as the final word is contained in the revelation itself. But such claims have to be treated as spurious in the absence of originality.

St Paul was a Jew named Saul who changed the 'S' in his name to 'P' on conversion. He had a greater aversion to Judaism than St Peter, another apostle, who wanted Christianity to develop as a reformation of Judaism. But Paul had greater ambitions and felt that circumcision and Sunday, August 29, 2004the Jewish injunction against pork would be inconvenient to the Romans and abolished both. Thus Christianity became a proselytising religion but in the process it had to absorb Roman paganism, finally emerging as a Roman religion in Hebrew clothing.

Islam faced other difficulties. According to Max Mueller, Mohammed negotiated with the Jews for recognition as one of their prophets. By then the Jews were weary of prophets and, realising the dangerous portents of a new prophet, rejected his claims. Mohammed started a new religion incorporating all the Jewish features including circumcision and the dietary inhibitions. According to the same author, he also developed a summary method of dealing with dissent. Under a hopeless siege by 3,000 Meccan soldiers in Medina, he reached an agreement with them and got them to disarm in good faith. Overnight he changed his mind under 'divine command' and ordered the massacre of all the unarmed opponents. Such behaviour by either Bill Clinton or Yitzhak Rabin would be condemend by today's Muslims as perfidy but became the standard for dealing with heresies in Islam as exemplified by the Iranian *fatwa* against Rushdie. Given such peremptory and raw treatment, Zorastrianism withered away in Iran though some 3 million 'pseudo-Zorastrians' had recently surfaced in Tadjikistan professing interest in reviving their ancestral faith in that Central

Asian country.

Islamic variants, like the Ahmedi and Ismaili faiths, considered heretic by the orthodoxy, could sprout and survive only under the tolerant conditions of a predominantly Hindu India.

Christianity, on the other hand, developed schizoid features. The Jewish God, though totally demanding in obedience, was structurally ill-defined. A vague cloud or a moving pillar of fire could be inspiring but could not be a subject for rational debate. The Greek 'pagans', like Plato and Aristotle, on the other hand, had developed visions of God(s) and the heavens which were detailed and intellectually stimulating. Christianity eagerly absorbed these concepts and the conflicts, inherent in the amalgamation of the much-derided paganism and the Jewish monotheism, gave rise to the heresies in Christianity which suffered from the typical symptoms of the 'Mahesh Bhatt syndrome'. Faced with a self-effacing Muslim mother ready to submerge her identity for the sake of her children and husband, and an affectionate Brahmin father who conferred on him all the patronymic benefits, Bhatt lost his sense of identity in a welter of conflicting religious connotations and suffered an all-consuming rage within himself which led to a mental breakdown. Psychiatry and some gurus pulled him out of the morass but still left him cold and unreconciled to the conventions of the family and the society. Likewise, Christianity too became an angry religion and turned to indiscriminate populism. R.K. Narayan portrays the curse-laden European missionaries in India with a delightful sense of humour.

Gnosis, the first midway house between the Christian and Pagan religions, was also the first to be rejected as a heresy in later times. It considered Jewish exclusiveness as below the Greek dignity. The sensible world was considered as the creation of a minor Greek deity called Ialdabaoth who was identified as the Jewish Yahweh. The serpent was not wicked in this view for it warned Eve against the deceptions of Yahweh. Jesus was considered a man in whom the Son of God resided temporarily to exorcise Yahweh. When Christianity acquired government patronage in the time of Constantine, it turned against the Gnostic teachings and declared them heretical.

Origen was a neoplatonic philosopher who attempted to systematise and blend the theologies of paganism and Christianity. He believed in the pre-existence of Plato's souls and considered Christ as human before he became a divine incarnation. Origen also maintained that the pure reasoning of the Greek philosophers could blend easily with Christian dogmas. Though he is accepted as one of the Christian Fathers, his doctrines were vehemently opposed by St Jerome and later denounced as her- esy. Origen also demanded that the new religion should not take part in political governance of any state. This doctrine was re- jected at the time Constantine converted when Christianity got royal support and more importantly, the army's approval.

Arians considered Jesus, the Son, as a creation of God and hence inferior to the Father. The view accorded well with the opinion that Christian Trinity was an adaptation of the Augustan triumvirate. The concept of differential divinity for the Son and Father was rejected by the council at Nicoea in AD 325. The controversy divided Christianity into three factions: the Byzantian, the Egyptian and the Syrian. During the rule of Emperor Theodosius the Catholic rejection of Arianism finally prevailed but weakened the affiliation of Egypt and Syria which quietly succumbed to Islamic invasion. The internal schism in Christianity was responsible for the Islamic dominance in the region.

During the same period a synagogue was burnt at the alleged instigation of a local Bishop. St Ambrose intervened on behalf of the Bishop with the king and a pattern was set for Christian anti-semitism. The Saint recalled a divine precedent in his favour: “Have you not heard, Oh! Emperor! How, when Julian (the apostate King) commanded that the Temple of Jerusalem should be restored, those who were clearing the rubbish were consumed by fire.” The Saint’s deduction was that the destruction of a synagogue was divinely ordained and hence not punishable by an earthly monarch. No wonder the Portuguese in India and the Spaniards in South America indulged in historical vandalism against the local peoples.

St. Augustine attempted to purge the Greek elements from Christian theology. God was envisioned as a creator of the world out of nothing, according to Christian theology, which was held impossible by the Greeks.

Greek philosophy led to Pantheism which held that every- thing is part of God, a concept to which Christian mystic were greatly attracted. Throughout the Christian era the mystics were always on the verge of heresy essentially because Christianity denied any individual experience outside the scriptural prescriptions.

Pelagius questioned the doctrine of Original Sin and believed in the role of Free Will in moral choice. This heresy was energetically denounced by St Augustine who held that “All who died unbaptised including infants, go to hell.” As we are otherwise totally depraved, we cannot complain.

According to the Saint, “Damnation proves God’s justice; salvation his mercy.” Bertrand Russell comments: “Seeing that these were the preoccupations handed over to the converted barbarians it is no wonder that the succeeding age surpassed all other fully historical periods in cruelty and superstition.”

“The year 1000 may be conveniently taken as marking the end of the lowest depth to which Western Europe sank.” It is sad to note that religious dogma had played a major role in this degradation.

Appendix 2
The Church as a Tool of Imperialism

This is an excerpt from a long article which the late Major T.R. Vedantam wrote in 1982, and which forms part of *Christianity: An Imperialist Ideology* published by Voice of India in 1983.

The motivation for Christian evangelism is simple. Disrupt and destroy. The missions make no secret of it. It is a mistake to think that Christian missionary enterprise is a religious movement. The Christians themselves never claimed it to be a religious movement. It was a declaration of war and an attack on the religious and cultural set up of the people of Asia and Africa, and it was always politically motivated.

Traditional religion has collapsed in Christendom, which is no more Christian. This is a post-war phenomenon. The divorce of the Church and State relationship, the old pattern, is now complete. But it has now emerged in a different form. The old theology based on untenable doctrines and dogmas has been totally discarded by the industrialized West with its new religion of scientific technology. The Church, therefore, is undergoing a process known to social scientists as politicization. The term does not mean merely political activity. By politicization of religion is meant the internal transformation of the faith itself so that it comes to be defined in terms of political values. This has resulted in the entry of the State into areas which were formerly the traditional preserve of the churches. That means, the Church State relationship has been reinstated in a new form.

The Church is today a tool for organizing political action as decided and directed by the State. There is a clear distinction between the involvement of religion with politics and the reinterpretation of religious values as political values. This is the politicization that is happening in the modern Church. If the Church does not agree then the justification for its existence just disappears. Christians as a religious body do not exist today in the Western world in a meaningful way. But Christian evangelism is still reaping a harvest in the Third World. Thus the political consciousness of Christianity in the developing world actually originated within the politicized churches of the old world. The Christian religion has lost the power and the confidence to define its areas of influence and jurisdiction even on questions of social morality. In their death agonies, the churches are distributing the causes of their own sickness — the politicization of religion of the churches in the developing world in Asia and

Africa. This can be a fatal inheritance in the Eastern countries where religion is not yet so dead.[1]

Liberation Theology

This is the post-war model of Christian religion. The Chris- tian missions now claim that it has become their duty to liberate the oppressed and the suppressed all over the world. This movement works through the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the International Christian Council, etc. These organisations work under the direction and control of the governments of the Western superpowers. The USA, Canada, Britain, and Australia are in the forefront. USSR and China also seem to have a finger in the pie on their own terms. The Anglo-American group is keen to liberate India, Afghanistan, Laos, Kampuchea, VietNam, Thailand, Cuba, Iran, etc. According to them, Tibet, South Korea, South Africa, Rhodesia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Diego Garcia etc. do not come into this scheme. Countries in the Soviet zone of influence feel that these countries like Tibet, Salvador, South Korea etc. have to be urgently liberated from the "tyranny of the imperialists" and the "Reactionaries." Leftist groups have also been making a lot of noise about the need for drastic action to be taken to eliminate Racism from Africa.[2]

It is interesting to note that many of the high-ranking dignitaries of the Church, occupying key positions in these world councils and the international missionary organizations, happen to be all war veterans of World War II vintage. These Patriarchs installed as the heads of the Church hierarchy are talking in the language of exporting revolution to other countries. These Christian organizations, when making serious inroads into politics, use some special type of technical phraseology to make everything euphemistic. In the concept of Liberation Theology are also included the concepts of internal disruption, use of violence, civil disobedience, organizing resistance movements, etc.[3]

While the programme continues and even expands, it is worth noting that most of the money disbursed through these special funds has come not from traditional donors, but from new ones, mostly governments. This government element worries some critics within the organizations who see in it some dangerous portents. It is a breach of the Church and State relationship brought about not necessarily by philosophical arguments, but by pragmatic ones involving a political approach. Another serious implication is that some governments will be consciously aiding subversion in some other country. In 1925, in a conference at Stockholm sponsored by Life & Work and the Faith & Order Movements they postulated the slogan "Doctrine divides: Service Unites". These critics or the dissenters now feel that this slogan has now been

reversed to read “Doctrine unites; Service divides”. The ethical philosophy of Jesus is dead, and a political philosophy of violence has now taken its place. The developed countries are now making a serious effort to subvert and overthrow the governments established by law in the developing countries, using the churches as their tools.[4]

John Foster Dulles published a book, *War or Peace,* in 1957 (Macmillan, New York). In the chapter ‘Policies in Asia’ he writes: “In the past the United State policy in the east rested on the foundations of friendly relations with China. Our people, through Government, missionaries, doctors, and educators, have shared and built Chinese friendship for more than a century. Out of it have come such political doctrines as the ‘Hay doctrine of the open door’ in China, the ‘Hughes doctrine of territorial integrity.’ Out of it have also come Boxer Fund scholarships, Christian colleges in China, and Christian medical centres, including a Rockfeller Foundation development at Peking.”[5] Here Mr. Dulles is making a clear-cut statement that the USA has been using the Church and the mission organizations and institutions to build up its close relations with China. The Church in China is no more under the tutelage of the USA. Similar changes are coming up in other areas also.

Sixty years ago Christianity was at loggerheads with Communism. But today Liberation Theology is working in the grooves of Marxism. This has produced a most anomalous situation for the World Council of Churches, which is very much dependent on the Anglo-Americans for its finances. They have to apply this ideology to support the political ambitions of the capitalist West which has used and still continues to use the Church as a tool. The Church is only too willing to co-operate.

In the meanwhile, Christianity has become a danger and a threat to the safety, security and freedom of India. It is not yet too late. But it will brook no further delay. It is time that the Government and the people of this country tackle this problem with all the energy and resources at their command.

1. *Christianity and the World Order* by Edward Norman, Oxford University Press, 1979.
2. *Bulletins of the National Christian Council and World Council of Churches.*
3. "The Rejuvenation of the Russian Orthodox Clergy", a paper read before the Institute for Study of the USSR by Nadezhada Theodonovich.
4. *To Set at Liberty the Oppressed,* W.C.C., Geneva, 1975.
5. *Summary of the Niyogi Committee Report.*

Appendix 3
*Spiritual Shift**

The following article by Richard N. Osting which appeared in the *Time* magazine of 12 July 1993 shows what can happen to countries which allow Christian missions to function freely. It also shows how Christianity is trying desperately to find a new home in the Hindu-Buddhist world.

A great success story, Protestantism in South Korea now faces some unexpected problems.

With 700,000 Members, Seoul's Yoido Full Gospel Church claims to have the world's biggest congregation - and a Sunday schedule to match. As the 7 a.m. service ends, believers line up like rock fans to fill 13,000 seats for the next of six daily observances. Across the 200-room compound, 30,000 others can worship via closed-circuit TV, and 50,000 more tune in from 20 satellite congregations across the metropolitan area. The services' content is on a similar scale: hymns sung by one of 11 choirs, accompanied by a pipe organ and 24-piece orchestra, and inspiring sermons by Pastor David Cho, 57.

The Pentecostal megachurch is a fiting symbol for South Korea's Christian boom. The Yoido church was founded 31 years ago, when South Korea's Christians numbered only 1.2 million. Since then, the number of Christians, especially Protestants, has grown faster than in any other country, roughly doubling every decade. Today about a third of South Korea's 45 million people are Christian (11.8 million Protestants and 3 million Roman Catholics) vs. about 40% who are nominally Buddhist. Predicts Pastor Kim Dong Ik of Seoul's Saemunan Presbyterian Church: "In 10 years we will overtake them." Christians, says Chung Chin Hong, a professor of religion at Seoul National University, "dominate universities, the bureaucracy and even the army." Nine of the top 10 generals are professing Christians, as were the three major candidates in last year's presidential race. The winner, stubborn reformer Kim Young Sam, is an elder in the conservative Chunghyun Presbyterian Church. Many prominent businessmen are Christian. The ambitious Protestant churches have dispatched at least 2,000 missionaries overseas.

Christianity in Korea dates back to 1784, when a Catholic convert returned from China to start a church. Protestantism, introduced a century later, grew much faster because American missionaries brought not only the Gospel but

also education, medicine and technology. During Japanese colonial rule from 1910 to 1945, Christians were prominent in the underground independence movement. Under military regimes from 1961 through 1987, many championed democracy and human rights, even though fellow Protestants worked for the government.

Protestantism has risen in concert with economic success. As South Koreans emerged from the ruins of the war to rebuild a shattered economy, many Protestant pastors preached god-ordained industriousness and prosperity. At Cho's church, one wall is emblazoned with the little-known *III John 2:* "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." Cho is unapologetic about promising this-worldly success. "If we are faithful," he says, "God will bless us." (To some Christian critics, however, that message is uncomfortably close to Korea's folk paganism, which offers magical benefits through propitiation of the gods.)

The growing Christian prominence has provoked a Buddhist backlash. Buddhist denominations complained publicly when President Kim, newly inaugurated, held private Protestant services at his official residence, the Blue House; the President continued the devotions but deleted them from the published list of his activities. Occasional acts of zealotry fuel Buddhist concern: last January a Christian battalion commander caused an uproar in the country when he ordered the dismantling of a Buddhist prayer hall on his base; an image of the Buddha was dumped into a sack and discarded. Buddhists forced the army to remove the officer and restore the prayer hall, and the Defense Minister issued an apology. President Kim made an announcement on Buddha's birthday that emphasized "respect for the others' right to worship their own religions."

Buddhists are imitating the aggressive proselytizing of their competitors. Says Kim Huh Chung, chief of the education department in Buddhism's dominant Chogyejong sect; "In modern society you cannot bring religion to people if it is not suitable for them. We can only blame ourselves if Buddhism declines." Buddhist temples, which formerly opened on fixed days of the month, now open on Sundays to accommodate worshippers. Buddhists also sponsor a Seoul radio station and advertise yoga and meditation classes to combat urban stress.

Christianity's most serious challenge may come from within. During the prosperous past two decades, observes philosophy professor Son Bong Ho of Seoul National University, it looked as if God was keeping his side of the "prosperity-Gospel" promise. Says he: "Those churches that have emphasized material blessings have grown faster than mainstream denominations." With the country currently caught in a painful economic downturn, the worst since 1980, the question arises whether the go-go Gospel will retain its appeal in

times of adversity.

* There is nothing spiritual about the shift. It is a shift from the divine to the diabolical.

Appendix 4
Hindus vis-à-vis Jesus

I am reproducing letters exchanged recently between a lady in England and myself. They are relevant to the subject of this book.

Tel: 0409 281403
Mrs Sandy Martin
2 College Road
SHEBBEAR
Beaworthy
Devon EX21 5HH
England

28 March, 1994

Dear Mr. Goel,

As part of my PhD thesis at Exeter University researching Hindu understandings of Jesus, I would very much appreciate it if you could take the time to answer the questions enclosed to ensure that the study is completely up-to-date. I am eager to present the findings entirely from a Hindu perspective (which is also my own) and contemporary information from Hindu sources, rather than Christian reflections on Hindu insights, is somewhat scarce. I would appreciate the permission to quote any response you might make which would be included in a penultimate chapter on contemporary Hindu interpretations of Jesus and the Hindu-Christian dialogue.

I would very much appreciate your co-operation for this work and hope to hear from you. Please do move beyond the scope of the framed questions if there is somethings further you wish to add. Thank you.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Sd. Sandy Martin

Contemporary Hindu Responses to Jesus: A Questionnaire

1. What significance, if any, do you think Jesus has for Hindus around the world today?
2. If there is significance, how is Jesus primarily understood — as Jesus or as a Christ, and if the latter, is this the equivalent of avatar? If not, how is avatar best understood today?
3. With what strand of Hinduism is Jesus most closely associated today? Is such association primarily linked to Hinduism in the West or does it also apply to the Indian situation?
4. Have Hindu understandings of Jesus changed since Hinduism's expansion into the West and the movement towards it of many western devotees?
5. Many liberal Christian theologians criticise Hindu interpretations of Jesus as being out of touch with recent Christian 'discoveries' of the Jewishness of Jesus and his historical context. What would be your response to this critique, arising as it does from a very different world view?
6. Study so far suggests to me that Hindu interest in Jesus arose initially as a reaction against western Christian imperialism in India; this later changed to an incorporation of Jesus within a Hindu framework divorced from received western Christianity. Since the threat of Christianity subsided, there appears to have been no real development of Hindu responses to Jesus. How would you assess this critique?
7. Would there have been a natural interest in Jesus without the encounter in India during British rule there? If so, how might this have differed from current interpretations? If it had arisen from within a friendly interfaith exchange, would the Hindu response have been different?
8. Could you please summarise your personal perspective as a Hindu to the Hindu-Christian dialogue and the relevance of Jesus to that?

Sita Ram Goel
2/18, Ansari Road,
New Delhi - 110 002
7th April, 1994

Dear Mrs. Martin,

By a strange coincidence your letter dated 28 March and the Questionnaire reached me on the day and at the hour when I had just finished the final draft of my small monograph, *Jesus Christ: An Artifice for Aggression.* It is meant to be a companion volume to the second and enlarged edition of *Catholic*

Ashrams, a book I wrote in 1988. It is quite some time since I have been trying to have a close look at Jesus Christ, the stock-in-trade of Christian missions, and in the process have become conversant with the Christological research undertaken in the modern West over the last more than two hundred years. I had never imagined that Jesus was such a flimsy figure, historically as well as doctrinally.

Your letter has come as a surprise. I wonder why you have addressed your Questionnaire to me. It is true that I have written quite a bit on Christianity, and published some more. But I am hardly a representative Hindu at present, though I may become one in the not-too-distant future. Hindus by and large continue to subscribe to *sarva-dharma samabhava* (equal respect of all religions), as I also did before I studied Christianity and Islam with the help of their orthodox sources. I hope you have written to some other Hindus also so that you have a fair sample of the current Hindu opinion on the subject.

I have not been able to understand quite clearly what you mean when you say that you are “eager to present the findings entirely from a Hindu perspective (which is also my own)”. I trust that you are not a Hindu like the late Father Bede Dayananda Griffiths, or my friend Raimundo Panikkar. You may clarify the point if you care. I am certainly curious.

You are welcome to incorporate in your thesis whatever I say on the points raised by you. My only request is that you will not quote me at random, or selectively, or out of context. I have noticed again and again that the average scholar from the West is very scrupulous when it comes to presenting other people's point of view. But I cannot say the same about Western scholars with a conscious Christian bias. Very recently I had a shocking experience from the Southeast Asia correspondent of the Time magazine. I found him absolutely dishonest.

I am enclosing a list of Voice of India publications. Some of the titles may interest you. Arun Shourie, the well-known scholar-journalist, is also releasing shortly his latest book, *Missionaries in India: Continuities, Changes, Dilemmas.* He was invited to speak from the Hindu point of view in a meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India held recently at Nagpur. You will find it very informative vis-à-vis your subject. Regards,

Sincerely

Sd.

(Sita Ram Goel)

Encl.: List of publications

Questionnaire

Before I take up your questions one by one, I prefer to give a little background about the intellectual atmosphere in post-independence India. This may help you in sizing up your subject.

The scene in post-independence India has been dominated more or less completely by Communists and Socialists and Leftists of all sorts. They have shown no interest in religious sub- jects, least of all in Jesus Christ. It is only recently that the Ayodhya Movement has drawn the attention of our educated elite towards what they call religion. But in this context too they have proved that they are either equally ignorant about all religions or equally indifferent to them.

Of course, there have been Hindu parties and platforms present on the scene all along. But they have hardly mattered till recently. The Arya Samaj seems to have lost its fire and has become more or less moribund. The Hindu Mahasabha, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) have never been interested in doctrinal Christianity or Jesus Christ as such. Their headache has been the conversions by Christian missions. If you ask them about Jesus, they are most likely to say that he was a good man. Some of them may also call him a mahatma or rishi or even an avatar. But that means nothing. They will say the same about Muhammad or about any other prominent figure for that matter.

Thus there is no truth whatsoever in the Christian missionary propaganda abroad that a Hindu-Christian dialogue is on in India at present. I am totally unaware of any such dialogue being in the forefront. Of course, there are some Christian groups across the country who are holding “dialogues” with “Hindus” and reporting them in the Christian press, here and abroad. But the whole thing is a farce, in any case a far cry from the Hindu-Christian dialogues during the long period from Raja Rammohan Roy to Mahatma Gandhi. First of all, there are now very few Hindu thinkers who are interested in Jesus Christ, one way or the other. Secondly, Hindu thinkers who have studied Jesus Christ in depth and who thus qualify for the dialogue, are fewer still. Thirdly, knowledgeable Hindus are hardly the Hindus whom Christian groups are likely to invite for dialogue. They pick up Hindus who suit their purpose, with the result that Hindu participants are no more than mere presence reported in the Christian press. For all practical purposes, the current Hindu-Christian dialogue is a Christian monologue. It seems that Christian theologians in India have lost completely their self-confidence of earlier days.

Nor is there any truth in the missionary propaganda abroad, namely, that Hindus are hungering for Jesus or that, in the words of Mother Teresa, Hindus need Christ. This may help the missionaries to raise funds and gain other types of support from their Western patrons. But the fact remains that this is as big a lie in the present as it was in the past. Hindus have never been hungry for Jesus nor have they ever been in need of Christ, notwithstanding the “harvest” which missionaries have reaped from time to time. The force and fraud and material allurements involved in the missionary methods tell the true story.

Now I will take up your questions.

1. Jesus as such has never had any significance for Hindus at large. At best he means to them one religious teacher among many others. The educated Hindus have been fed for a long time and by some of the best Hindu leaders on the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount, the Jesus who saved the adulteress from being stoned, and the Jesus who cried from the cross that those who had wronged him may be forgiven. But for Hindus like me who have studied him first-hand and in the context of the history he has created all through these two thousand years, he means death to Hinduism and all that it stands for, the same as in the ase of many Pagan religions and cultures around the world.

2. To the best of my knowledge, no Hindu thinker has ever accepted Jesus as the Christ. Some Hindu thinkers may have called him an avatar, but no Hindu thinker has ever equated him with Rama, or Krishna, or the Buddha. Hindus who know the shastric meaning of *avatara* as also the theological meaning of Christ, will never equate the two terms. In any case, I have not come across any Hindu literature on the subject. Christian theologians have tried to put their own words in Hindu mouths, or their own meanings in Hindu terms. But that is another story. Hindu scholars are not at all eager to get credit for such exercises.

3. Christian theologians have tried for many years to relate Jesus to practically every strand of Hinduism — from Advaita to Bhakti. But I wonder why they have not been able to make up their mind and say for sure that this is the strand of Hinduism which needs Jesus as it crown. So far it has been a free for all, which shows what they are about. They are out to try different Hindu versions of Jesus on different sections of Hindu society. There have also been a few Hindus who have tried to see this or that strand of Hinduism in Jesus. But they have done so in order to prove that Jesus was some sort of a Hindu, or that Christianity has borrowed from Hinduism. I have yet to know of a Hindu who has asked Hindus to rally round Jesus because he is close to some strand of Hinduism. For Hindus like me who have studied Hinduism as well as

Jesus, he can be related to no strand in Hinduism. We see in him a dark force arising from the lower levels of human nature. Hinduism in its essence can have nothing to do with the likes of him except as villains *a la* Vritra or Ravana of Kamsa.

4. I am not competent to answer this question because I really do not know anything about Hinduism's expansion into the West. All I know is that some Hindu swamis are getting audiences, even followers, in the West. I know the Hare Krishna movement also to a certain extent. I was told by friends in the USA that some Hindu swamis start with fulsome hymns to Jesus before they come to their subject proper, or tell their audience that they are not saying anything which was not said by Jesus long ago but which the Christian West has missed. I can understand the strategy, witting or unwitting. But I cannot approve of it. I want Hindu swamis to be more self-confident, and not lean on Jesus. I met some converts to Hinduism in the USA. They came under the influence of another convert turned guru. They did not tell me that they were dissatisfied with Jesus, only that the new guru was more satisfying. The other type of Western converts to Hinduism I have met in India. In their case the rejection of Jesus and the whole Judeo-Christian tradition is total. But all this is not sufficient for me to draw any firm conclusions. In any case, I am not aware of any new understanding of Jesus dawning in this country simply because some people in the West feel drawn towards Hinduism.

5. I am afraid I have not understood your question. Which are the Hindu interpretations of Jesus that liberal Christian theologians are criticising? So far I have known only one Hindus interpretation of Jesus, namely, that he was a good man, preach- ing humility, compassion, and forgiveness. Thus Hindus have remained out of touch not only with recent Christian "discoveries" but with all Christian "discoveries" at all times. Jesus has never meant so much to them as to make them go into Christological researches. I have not come across a single book on Christology written by a Hindu. Even educated and modern Hindus are not aware of the subject. But I am sure that once they get informed they will feel more at home with Jesus the Jewish preacher in a historical context than they have done with Jesus the Christ. For instance, I am conversant with the latest researches. I find Jesus the Jew more acceptable than the Jesus of Christian theology.

6. You are quite correct that Hindus were forced to take interest in Jesus only because he came with Western imperialism, and threatened Hinduism in all sorts of ways. But you are not correct when you say that they incorporated Jesus in a Hindu framework. Before Western imperialism came to this country Hindus had lived with Islamic imperialism for several centuries, and learnt the art of flattering the

bully out *of* his crude hectoring and cruel deeds. They appealed to the mullah and the sufi in the name of “true” Islam and the “real” Muhammad. The art also became a belief in some sections of Hindu society with the passing of time. But it will be untrue to say that Muhammad was ever incorporated into the Hindu framework. The same applies to the Jesus of Western imperialism. Hindus have only tried to beat the missionaries with their own stick, that is, by inventing a “true” Jesus and praising him to the skies while denouncing proselytisation in his name. That is all. And that also has come to an end with the coming of independence. Christian missionaries can no more afford to be bullies. Hindus are no more in need of the “true” Jesus. Now they are bothered only about the hristian missions as a political problem. No new response to Jesus is called for. Christian theologians are deluding themselves if they think that Jesus has ever meant anything much to the Hindus.

7. Hindus had heard of Jesus even before the British advent. Jesus was very much present in Islamic theology. But I am not aware of any Hindu taking notice of him in the medieval times. They would have shown the same indifference to him, had he come with preachers without any backing of bayonets. Hindus have never denied to anyone the freedom to preach what one likes. They have their own way of smiling at only sons and sole saviours. They remained indifferent to Muhammad so long it was only some sufis settling down among them and presenting him as the last prophet. But they had to take notice of Muhammad when the sufis invited the swordsmen of Islam. So also in the case of Jesus. Even today, take away the financial and political backing which the powerful West provides to Jesus and see the result. Hindus will have no objection to Christian preachers trying to make converts. But I am very doubtful about the Hindu response to Jesus being more positive or substantial than it has been so far. Hindus have thousands of saints, and Jesus comes nowhere near even the most minor of their spiritual teachers. If all the military might, financial largesses, and media power of the West has failed to impress Jesus on the Hindu mind all these years, there is no reason to believe that he will fare better without this equipment.

8. The most worthwhile Hindu-Christian dialogue took place when Raja Rammohun Roy, Swami Dayananda, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi spoke from the Hindu side. John Mott and the Tambaram conference of the International Missionary Council (1938) found the Christian missionaries at the end of their wits in the face of Mahatma Gandhi. They would have been nowhere if Nehruvian secularism, a continuation of Western imperialism, had not rescued them out of the tight corner into which they had been driven. They resurged forward, and devised new mission strategies of Indigenization

and Liberation, etc. They also achieved some notable success, particularly in the North-East. But they never felt the need of a Hindu-Christian dialogue any more. Why are they in need of it now? The Second Vatican is invoked as the new inspiration. But the Second Vatican itself has to be explained. We have not been taken in by the airs of condescension in the papal declaration of 1965 about Hinduism. We know that Christianity has never made concessions out of an inner seeking. In fact, the word "inner" is not applicable in the case of Christianity. It has always used or bowed down to outer circumstances. The Second Vatican saw that Christianity was in a bad shape in the West, and had to find a new home in the East. Dialogue with Hinduism and Buddhism became the new mission strategy. But unfortunately for the Christian mission, Hindus have shown no interest in the dialogue. Nor are they likely to show any interest so long as the missionary apparatus is maintained intact and the right to convert is insisted upon. It amounts to picking my pocket after making me look the other way. I have told my friends such as Raimundo Panikkar that if they are sincere about a dialogue with Hindus, they should denounce the missionary apparatus. They smile and dismiss me as a Hindu chauvinist. Even so, we are prepared for a dialogue provided the Christian side does not lay down the ground rules. That is not acceptable to them. What they want us to accept in the first instance is that Christianity has a lot in common with Hinduism, that Christianity is a great and unique religion, that Jesus is a spiritual power, and that Hindus should have no objection to Christian missions. We will not walk into the trap. In any case, we are in a dialogue with them through Voice of India publications. They have refused to respond so far. We do not know whether the silence is prompted by the fear of losing the argument, or by the self-satisfied smugness of those who wield big money, big organization, and big influence. Jesus has a relevance to the dialogue if the Christian side allows us to present him as we and not they see him. Why should we not have our say?

Bibliography

Ackerley, Ben Edward, *The X-Rated Bible,* Austin, Texas, USA, 1985

Arnhein, Michael, *Is Christianity* True? London, 1984

Baigent, Michael, et al, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail,* Corgi Books, London, 1983

------- *The Messianic Legacy,* Corgi Books, London, 1987

Ball, W.P. et al, *The Bible Handbook,* Revised Edition, Austin, Texas, USA, 1986

The Bible, Authorised (King James') Version Dawning, Rev. F.G., The *Church and Jesus,* London, 1970

Durant, Will, *The Story of Civilization,* Volume III, *Caesar and Christ,* Fourth Printing, New York, 1944.

Elst, Koenraad, *Psychology of Prophetism: A Secular Look at the Bible,* New Delhi, 1993

Gandhi, M.K. *Collected Work,* Volume Seventy-one, New Delhi Georges, Ory, *An Analysis of Christian Origins,* London, 1961

Gibbon, Edward, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* Modern Library Edition, New York

Goldstein, M., *Jesus in the Jewish Tradition,* New York, 1950

Healy, Kathleen, *Christ as Common Ground: A Study of Christianity and Hinduism,* Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, 1990

The Jewish Life of Christ Being the *Sepher Toldoth Jeshu* or Book of the Generation of Jesus, translated from the Hebrew by G.W. Foote and J.M. Wheeler, Austin, Texas, USA, 1985

Johnson, Paul, *A History of Christianity,* Pengiun Book, London, 1978

Klausner, J., *Jesus of Nazareth,* London, 1925 Mc Arthur, H., *In Search of the Historical Jesus,* London, 1970

Mackey, James P., *Jesus the Man and the Myth,* London, 1979

The New English Bible, the New Testament, OUP, 1961

The New Testament, translated by James A. Kleist and Joseph L. Lilly, Milwaukee, USA, 1956

Panikkar, Raimundo, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism,* London, 1964

Paul Pillai, K.V., *Indias' Search for the Unknown Christ* (1978), New Delhi, 1984.

Prophet, Elizabeth Clare, *The Lost Years of Christ,* Livingston, MT, USA, 1984.

Schweitzer, Albert, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* (1910), London, 1945

Smith, William Benjamin, *Ecce Deus: Studies of Primitive Christianity,* London, 1912

Thomas, M.M., *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance,* Madras, 1970

Wells, G.A., *Did Jesus Exert?* London, 1986

Wilson, Ian, *Jesus: The Evidence,* Pan Books, London, 1985

Winter, Paul, *On the Trial of Jesus,* Berlin, 1961

World Christian Encyclopaedia: Comparative Study of Churches and Religions, AD 1900-2000, edited by David B. Barret, OUP, 1982